

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Agnes Eun Soon Rho Chun

Agnes Eun Soon Rho Chun was born in Honolulu on June 9, 1925. Her parents, Hee Chang Rho and Young Hee Chi Rho, were originally from Ong Jin in Hwanghae-do, Korea. Chun lived in the multi-ethnic neighborhood of Pālama with her parents, two brothers and two sisters.

Her mother worked in the cannery and took in sewing to support the family because her father was in poor health. He passed away in 1935 when Chun was a third-grader at Ka'iulani School. Chun's oldest brother and sister were pulled out of school to work. When she was fourteen, Chun borrowed the social security card of an older girl in order to work summers as a trimmer and packer in the pineapple cannery. She went to Kalākaua Intermediate School, then to McKinley High School, but her education was interrupted by World War II.

Chun was sixteen and a high school junior on December 7, 1941. She first heard planes overhead, then saw a plane bearing the red circle of Japan. In the days that followed, Chun helped with wartime registration and fingerprinting. With school temporarily closed, Chun worked as a messenger, and later a timekeeper, at Ford Island in 1942. Following what would have been her senior year, she spent a half day in school and a half day working at Ford Island, which enabled her to graduate in 1944.

In her career in government service, Chun held various supervisory accounting positions, including that of comptroller in the Pacific third fleet. She worked in Korea as financial manager with the army before retiring in 1980 with thirty-eight years of service.

She was married in 1949 to Soon Ho Chun, a teacher. She has three children. Agnes Chun was widowed in 1980.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Agnes Eun Soon Rho Chun (AC)

October 28, 1992

Nu'uaniu, Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Agnes Eun Soon Rho Chun at her home in Nu'uaniu, O'ahu, Hawai'i, on October 28, 1992. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay. I guess we can start today's interview by having you talk about your parents, and the first question I have about your parents, Hee Chang Rho and Young Hee Chi Rho, is where did your parents originally come from?

AC: My parents came from Ong Jin in Hwanghae-do, Korea. My dad and mother [Hee Chang Rho and Young Hee Chi Rho] were married there and they had three children. Eventually their children all died when they were infants. My father, I believe (it) was in 1903, had a very good friend (whose) name was Mr. Lee, Hong Kee—Mr. Lee being the last name. And from what my mother tells us, he had planned to (emigrate) to Hawai'i, and in the process, talked my father into coming. My father (read and wrote) Chinese characters (so he must have had extensive schooling in Korea). I don't know whether they had a very difficult time in Korea concerning livelihood. My mother just said he upped and decided that he'd come with his friend. My mother found out from friends that he had left. My mother was living close to her sister, and so she stayed with her sister. My dad came out here, worked in the plantations, someplace in Kaua'i. Eventually (after a ten-year separation), when he came (to Honolulu), he (asked) my mother (to join him). (She arrived) here in (1912) and (so) had never (experienced) the plantation (life). (I only recall her saying that they lived) in the Pālama area, close to Akepo Lane. (Therefore, she) never had the experiences that many of the Korean women had, like (working in) the kitchens at the (plantation) camp (cooking for the men and doing their laundry). My mother said she had an (upstairs) apartment in the Pālama area (and that) things (were) so cheap at that time. Before (my father) went to work, (he would go) downstairs (to) the coffee shop/bakery and buy coffee for five cents a pot. (He also bought) pancakes and bread. So my mother (was quite comfortable at that time).

(However), my father got ill, and then was unable to work, so that's (when we) felt our hardship. (Before his illness, he was) working at the pineapple cannery (and) was in charge of (a group of men on contract) stacking (cans of pineapple and he was also a watchman). (As the lead person of the men, my mother tells us of how my father divided the money amongst the workers but considered the way he did it as stupid.) He would divide (the pay) amongst (the workers including) himself (and for example) if he (had) three pennies (left for six of them) he (would) not keep the pennies (but would) buy (box) matches, two for a penny, or whatever, (and he) would just divide it evenly. My mother said she thought it was so

ridiculous for him to feel like that, but that character shows up later on (in his other ventures). My father had very good hands, able to repair things and do things. (He made a Korean chess (set which were) little wooden blocks with the (Chinese) characters on it. (He carved the characters on the blocks. Mother remembers the raves he received from his friends. He was a handyman.) He was so good at (doing) all kinds of things, (and repairing of things that) this friend of his one day told him, "You're so good with your hands. Let's go into a secondhand business. I'll be the one going around with my cart to pick up things (and) you fix (them)."

(They formed a business but) eventually they broke up (because of my father's honesty). My mother (tells about the used) charcoal stove (his partner bought for) fifty cents. My father (did such a good refurbishing job his partner said), "Let's sell it for \$4.50."

(But) my father (would not go along with it saying), "How can you do that? You're selling it way over (the price you paid)."

That was one of the incidents I can remember my mother telling me. So eventually they broke up because the (partner) insisted on marking up the goods way over what my father thought was fair. But my mother again told me (that's how my father was). She says, "If the item was so good and was sellable (for the higher price), why (did he) get involved in that kind of (argument)?"

But eventually that's how it turned out. And I recall he did a lot of things. I remember he even made me pajamas. He was really good at a lot of things. I think, that's (how) my brother picked up (the trait)—in fact, my two brothers were always able to do things [with their hands]. My sister (Flora) eventually went into tailoring. When my father got ill, my mother at that time said that she didn't want to go on welfare, so she had my brother (Chong Hun) leave school when he was a junior, and my sister (Flora, when she was) in the eighth grade. She was (the third) in the family. My (second) brother graduated from high school. My sister, Violet, (the fourth in the family) finished two years at the university. When the war broke out, I was only sixteen (and a junior in high school).

MK: You know, backing up a little bit, you know, you mentioned that your father worked on a plantation on Kaua'i. Did you ever hear in conversations with your mother where on Kaua'i he worked and what type of work he did on the plantation?

AC: No, she never mentioned it. Probably because she never knew. All she could remember was that (he) was on Kaua'i. (His friend, Mr. Hong Kee Lee settled on Kaua'i and moved to Honolulu in the thirties.)

MK: And in terms of your mother's background, I was wondering, because she lived a really long time, into her (nineties), and lived with you, you probably had more opportunities to talk with her about her past. What do you know about your mother's family background and her life in Korea?

AC: I understand that she had one sister (and) a brother also. But I heard (more) of her sister (who) had three sons. (Before the Korean War in June) 1950, Korea was divided with the 38th parallel (running) above the state (of) Hwanghae-do (making it a part of South Korea). (Then after the war, the 38th parallel was re-drawn and Hwanghae-do came under North Korea.) What had happened was that in 1955, the Korean government, through Dr. Syngman

Rhee—Dr. Syngman Rhee was here in Hawai'i many years and he had a lot of help from the local Koreans toward that independence movement. So in the meantime, my mother was one of the staunch backers of Dr. Rhee. So in '55, over fifty of the Koreans who were very staunch backers of Dr. Rhee (were selected) for a trip to Korea (sponsored by the president, the Korean Airlines and others). And so my mother went (back to Korea for the first time since her departure in 1912). In fact, in 1950, she had wanted to go to Korea and was making preparations with some other ladies (to leave on June 30). We had a friend and his wife who left (earlier that month) and they (all planned to meet in Seoul).

(However, the Korean War, which started on) June 25, 1950, (prevented my mother from making) the trip. My mother had always talked to us about how good Korea was. (She complained about) the adobe soil in Hawai'i, saying that) when you (get mud on your shoes), it just sticks. (However, Korean soil never sticks. You can just brush it off.) (She also compared the Bartlett) pears that we have here (as being) so tasteless (compared to the Korean pears). She always wanted to go to Korea. (She was happy when the) opportunity in 1955 came along and she was selected. They (were treated as VIP [very important person] guests). One day, they were on the bus waiting to (go out when) this bus driver calls out, "Young Hee Chi Rho."

When my mother went out (there were) two (elderly men) standing there. (One) fellow said his name was Kang-Sung Lee, and one was Sung-Nim Lee. (She) said "I don't know who (you) are."

(They replied), "We're the sons of your sister."

(My mother) wasn't sure because she had seen them when they were very young. She was kind of skeptical so the older one said, "I'm Kă Dong."

(She then) knew that (he) was (her nephew). The word *kă dong* means, "dog doodoo."

MK: Oh my goodness.

AC: It (is) a pet name in Korea, I don't know how it evolved. And so I was told that she really believed them. And sure enough, as they were talking, all the old (memories) came (back). (They told her) what had happened when the Communists (invaded). They had property, and (the Communists) wanted a whole lot of things and wanted to take over. She [AC's aunt] refused. The boys told her that (the) servants ran away at that time. But what had happened was that they buried (her) sister. (The Communists did take) over everything. The servants came down (to Seoul) and somehow they got together (with the brothers), but nobody knows (for certain) what (had) happened.

(I could also remember that she had) a brother, and he was not a very good provider. He was sort of like a playboy. Her sister (however), was well-off. (She) stayed with her sister for ten years. It was ten years that my father stayed here alone and then brought her out here.

MK: And then in terms of the socio-economic class that your mother's family was in before she left there, how would you describe it? Was it a group of—was it a farming family, a landowning family?

AC: I don't know too much about her family, but what she told us was that my father's father,

that would be my grandfather—was a clerk. It's not a clerk but some kind of official in the little town that they lived. In fact, one time, she said that the Rho family had one grandson, my father's (brother's son who was a) very smart boy. I understand he was kidnapped and was never heard from. (He was seen as a threat to those in power in the town.)

MK: And you mentioned that, like, your father was really quite well-educated. He could write Chinese characters, Korean characters. How about your mother?

AC: It was so funny, my mother was not. My mother didn't (even) know how to hold a pencil. I remember during the war my sisters and my brothers were all (out of the house), they were married. I'm the youngest in the family, my sister right above me married in July, in 1942, and then my brother, the second brother, married in January of '42. And the oldest had married earlier. The first sister married before the war. And so what happened was that (only) I was living with my mother. During the wartime, our lives were really on hold because you couldn't go out anytime in the evening (with) blackout(s). (During that time) she wanted to learn (to write). She had (already) learned to read, because she was subscribing to this Korean newspaper, *The Pacific Weekly*. She also had these little Korean (story) books and she read those. I think I even have one, and she would read it over and over. One day, (she wrote) a letter to my sister in (Oregon). She had learned how to do this, writing, during the war years. I never knew that she was practicing so hard. One day I came home and she had this letter written (in) Korean characters, (called) *hangŭl*. (It looked) so very childish. I started reading it and (it) was so funny. She (wrote) she had gone down to the "*Su Tow Wah*." And I said, "*Su Tow Wah? What is Su Tow Wah?*" In Korean I asked her, "*Su Tow Wah ga mo yo?*"

Very indignant(ly) she said, "Why, *Su Tow Wah* is store."

"Why didn't you write the Korean word for store?"

Then it dawned on her (that she was using an English word). She gave (me a) sheepish smile. Then it dawned on me, (although) she was not speaking English, (she had) pick(ed) up these little words in English. (It) was so funny. She had never gone to school and was (actually) illiterate. (Another) experience (I remember involved) my (seven-year-old) son (and) my mother (at bedtime). They would lie down and then she would (converse with him in Korean). I never knew whether they really understood (each other), but I can hear (him) answer(ing) her yes or no, or whatever (in Korean). (One day) my mother told me that, "It's really embarrassing (because) Marcus told me that you live on this earth so long, and I only lived here a short while, and you can't even speak English." And he wanted to know how come. (Laughs)

Her (formal) education was nil, but she was a very smart woman, knew how to cook real well. (She sewed well, too.) I guess in Korea, they were doing handwork. (When) she came out here, (she) learned how to sew military trou(sers)—actually khaki outfits. (Since all ready-made clothes did not always fit properly,) the military (personnel), at that time, (utilized) tailors on the base, like Fort Shafter. (The tailors would cut out) trousers, (and contracted out to women who) would sew (on a piecemeal basis) at home, so my mother was doing that.

And as young as I was, (probably no more than six, while I was living at) Lopez Lane, I remember (hand sewing) buttonholes. My mother also sewed Korean dresses. She made all of her Korean outfits and I (kept some of) her clothes. Even up until the year before she died, she was making clothes for her friends who (were then in their sixties). They asked her to

make their clothes for death [burial attire]. She (also) made many, many quilts. (The) patchwork quilts (were of geometric designs).

MK: And so she wasn't educated in a formal sense before coming to the islands, and she got married to your father. Would you know how that marriage came about in Korea? Did she ever tell you how it became that way, that she married your father?

AC: When we were growing up, no one ever thought (of) your background, (your) roots. And I never bothered to ask her. And what little I could gather from her was (about) her brother who was a playboy. (All) she would tell me was that how much problems he gave her. They were living in this place called Ong Jin (but he) he would be in Haeju, a different town, many miles away. She told me she would walk miles (looking for him), but she never mentioned other things, and it's a sad thing that we didn't ask her.

MK: Did she ever say anything about the times that she had those three children in Korea and lost them?

AC: I think all the three children died when my father was there. (My mother said they suffered from *kyōngki*, seizure or stomach disorder.) When the child sleeps, they (experience something like a seizure). They would burn the needle (to sterilize it) and would prick (the) fingers and draw blood. (This) was supposed to be one of the remedies of treating the children.

MK: And then when your father unexpectedly left Korea and came to Hawai'i, what was her reaction? Did she ever share her reaction with you?

AC: The only time she would share her reaction was when things went wrong. She would say, "I don't know why I came out."

Then I would say, "Well, why did you come out here?" (We would kid her and say), "You shouldn't have come out."

Other than that. I never really found out from her.

MK: And when it came time to make the decision to follow her husband to Hawai'i, did she ever discuss how she came to that decision?

AC: No. I don't even recall my brothers or sisters mentioning the fact that they discussed it with her. Nobody seems to know. I guess she just decided that (it would be better to be with her husband than to be dependent on her sister).

MK: And then, how did she manage to come? How did she have enough funds to come and how was it all arranged?

AC: I think during the ten years that my mother was up there, I think my father was sending her money, but I really don't know and I never even asked. They (must have been) in touch for the ten years while he was out here.

MK: And when it came time for the voyage, later on did she talk about how the voyage was, coming to Hawai'i?

AC: No, all she mentioned was she came on the ship, *Mongolia*.

MK: And when she came, did she come with other Korean women that she was acquainted with or came to become acquainted with.

AC: No, she never mentioned that. But I don't think we had too many people coming from that area. Most of the picture brides who came out here, all came from the South Korea area.

MK: And so your father arrived in 1903. Your mother arrives in 1912 and they settled in Honolulu. By that time, your father was working for CPC [California Packing Corporation].

AC: The cannery.

MK: The cannery. When they settled in Honolulu, what type of neighborhood did they settle in?

AC: I think the neighborhood was a mix of Chinese and Japanese and Koreans. My mother mention(ed) that she had young lady (friends whose) children (she delivered). And in fact, there was one boy, I remember, Ernest Pai, (who was) delivered (by my mother and) lo and behold (Ernest) has (wavy) hair (like my mother). So she always says, "The boy was delivered by me, so he has my hair." My brother(s), had (wavy hair, too). My second brother is the one that had real (tight) waves. I (have wavy) hair, (but) my two sisters don't have waves. My grandson (has wavy hair, too) but his situation is that my daughter-in-law's mother also (has wavy) hair. My son (Marcus) has (wavy) hair too. So, she [AC's mother] always (said that), "All the children that I delivered are very gentle and good boys."

(Laughter)

AC: I mean good children. There was another (boy named Harry Wheng, whom she) delivered, too. I remember those two because I know the boys. And she also delivered some children for (a) Korean man who had married a Spanish woman. This woman gave birth to about twenty or twenty-one children. But I think from this man alone, they had around seventeen or eighteen (children). (The family's name is) J-U-H-N.

MK: And so your mother, in essence, was like a midwife to . . .

AC: (Yes, for) the neighborhood people.

MK: Did she ever say how she learned?

AC: No, she never said how they learned.

MK: Did she do other things beyond the actual delivery?

AC: They delivered, (and) they cut the umbilical cord and then they tied it.

MK: Did she provide any care to the woman or the baby right after birth?

AC: I don't know (for sure but) they must have (since serving of the *miyök* soup (*wakame*) is a tradition). That is supposed to be good for childbirth, (to) clean out the system. (I also) understand (that) after my brother was born she lost (some of) her leg strength. She could not

walk, she had to go from room to room (pushing) a stool. She said she (was still able to) cook although my father helped her. She couldn't stand up, but eventually she got well.

She went through a lot of hardship, (since) my father was ill and as I recall she worked at the pineapple cannery, (too) during my early years. I faintly remember that there was a nursery at the Hawaiian Pine [Hawaiian Pineapple Company, Ltd.]. I was there, and it seems like there was a ramp going up, and the nursery was right next to the ramp. And then the reason I recall that is because I remember going into the cafeteria. And I think they had white stools. When we lived (in) Akepo Lane, (I remember living in a) house (painted green). Then right behind (these Akepo Lane houses where) Dillingham Boulevard is now (situated), that area was just covered with elephant grass.

Those tall, stringy-looking grass grew tall. (I remember seeing) my brother and my sister catch grasshoppers and they'd toast it and then eat the grasshoppers. And then I remember (there was a walking bridge) over that area. You'd go over (the bridge to go to the CPC [California Packing Corporation]) pineapple cannery. And then (there was a) ramp going up (to the Dole pineapple cannery [Hawaiian Pineapple Company, Ltd.]).

MK: And your mother, when she was at the pineapple cannery, what kind of work did she do?

AC: She was a trimmer.

MK: You know, at that time, I'm wondering, how much English did she know, to be able to get a job and everything?

AC: Nothing. Up until the time she passed away, she never spoke English. She (would) go to the store and converse with the Japanese ladies at the store (in few broken English words). (Most of the time) they would just (point to what they needed), *moyashi*, or whatever. I remember, when my kids were growing up, we'd have cream on the table, and then she calls it "Ku-rim." So my kids would call, say, "*Halmuni*, ku-rim," and then she would pass it over. And then, they'd be out there playing and then they'd say, "*Halmuni*, ba-ru, ba-ru," because that's the way she says, "Ball." (That's the way) they conversed.

During the wartime, when we were growing up at Pua Lane, I remember we had a wooden (icebox). First it was a small square, varnished-looking thing (with an opening on the top where) you'd put the ice (wrapped in a rice bag). (There was) a pan (under the icebox to catch the) water. We had ice delivered every morning. Then in the evening, we would take the pan (of water) out (and empty it into the *laua'e* fern) baskets (my father made). (The baskets were) hanging right alongside our porch. (Around 1940) we bought a new icebox. It was a white one, a little bigger (in) size. (I remember trying) to make Jell-O [gelatin dessert], but it never turned out too good because it wasn't cold enough. I was fourteen (at that time). (Sometime in 1945, we bought an electric refrigerator.)

In Pua Lane, I remember the last rent we paid there was \$17.50 (per month) and that was 1950. In 1950 I moved from Pua Lane to Aupuni Street, up Kam[ehameha] Heights (where my son Marcus was born in 1951). At that time, we had a refrigerator, gas range. I was collecting the rent at that time. Several years before then, before the war broke out, they condemned the place. They condemned the place because they were going to build the Mayor Wright Homes. I remember the Auld family. I think it was Harry Auld (who) owned that property we were living on. There were six homes in this little (courtyard). I believe it was

about 5,000 or 7,000 feet of land. (Our) neighbors were (so close that if) you open(ed) your back door (you'd be about) ten feet (apart). (There were six units which included one duplex and four cottages.) The rent for the duplexes were \$16.50, and the (four) single (cottages) were \$17.50. When the Hawai'i Housing Authority took over, they asked me if I would collect the rent. I was getting ten dollars. They would give me ten dollars to collect every month's rent and take it down to the office at Hawai'i Housing (Authority). That office was in one of the buildings on King Street.

MK: So actually, you lived there for a long time.

AC: (About seventeen years.)

MK: From the time you were a small girl.

AC: I remember my father died in the middle house. We were living in the duplex, then we moved up front to the middle house, and then we moved up to the front house, you know. My father died in 1935 in that middle house.

MK: In 1935?

AC: [Nineteen] thirty-five. So I don't know how long we lived in the back house, but I remember the back house where my father was being treated (for his ailment). His stomach was (swelling) at that time. (My mother asked) this Korean man (to) come (to treat him with acupuncture). I remember climbing up (the) mango tree (and) look(ing) through the window (to watch the man stick a) gold needle (several times onto my father's stomach). I saw (a) small little peanut butter jar (with) a piece of paper in there, almost like a toilet tissue. He would light a match and immediately cover (the punctured) area. I could (see) the flesh come popping up. When we moved to the front house, my mother killed a goat in (the) yard (to get the liver). (My father) ate the liver raw with salt. (I also remember another incident) when we were living at Lopez Lane—about two streets away from Tamashiro Market. We were living downstairs (of a two-story cottage) and I remember my father being ill. That's where (my mother prepared a) black fish (over a kerosene stove). I remember a good, big-sized black fish. Looks like a carp, but I don't know what it is. She had a big pot with a little oil in it, and threw (the live fish) into the pot, covered it, and then poured water over it afterwards. (I remember seeing a) creamy(-looking stock) after it was boiled. Then he would drink that. (And at another time, my mother had someone bring her a black dog.)

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: You were saying that your mother got a black dog . . .

AC: I understand it has to be a black dog instead of a white one. My mother put (the dog in a) rice bag, and then filled the tub and drowned him. She (then) butchered the dog and then made soup, put lot of green onions (in it). I tasted it, saw (that) meat was stringy (and had lots of) fatty oil on the top, but she (skimmed off) the oil.

(While) my father (was) at that house in Lopez Lane, (he was given) another remedy for his jaundice. (To) remove (the jaundice from his body, he was given a) honeydew melon (preparation). (They) take the (melon) stem and dry it real well and pound it into a powder. She would roll a piece of paper (in the form of a straw). (She would place some of the powder on the) tip (of the straw and blow it into his nostril). My father would (start) sneezing and I saw this yellow liquid, oil-looking liquid, drip down into a bowl. My mother said (the yellow) liquid (was so potent, it could dye a) white piece of cloth yellow (permanently). My father told her that (he would) never (take that treatment again as it was so very painful).

Those are the things that I could remember my mother (desperately trying to cure my father). He refused to have an operation, that's the reason she tried so many home remedies. (In 1935 the surgical successes were few so) he said he would rather die than go through an operation. I was nine [years old] at the time, and even after he died, I could hear (his) moaning (from the pain). I remember his funeral, too. It was held at our church (located in a lane off School Street). (The church also) served as our (language school). The Korean care home (is now located at that site). I remember he had a lavender casket, velvet(een)-looking. (At) nine years old, that's what my recollection is.

MK: And that was the Korean Christian Church?

AC: (Yes, the) Korean Christian Church. We are located now on Liliha Street.

MK: And, you know, were your parents Christians in Korea, prior to coming to Hawai'i?

AC: I really don't know. I don't know whether they were Christians or not. All I remember (is that) when my mother was in Korea, the Japanese (had taken over) Korea. My mother said that there were many Japanese coming through their town. When I think about it, she never did say it, but she resented the Japanese coming over. [Korea was subject to Japanese rule and administration, 1910-1945.] I believe that was one of the reasons why it triggered her to come to Hawai'i. She says around 1910, "We had a lot of this disturbance with the Japanese coming through." At that time, they weren't forced to take Japanese names. And I know you're Japanese, but what happened was that when she came out here, (this anti-Japanese thinking) carried over, so she mentioned (this feeling to me) several times (as I was) growing up. Even my sister (Flora) was telling me that my mother used to get so upset when they would come home with Japanese friends. My mother says, "Don't associate with them."

(Remember the) Japanese slippers? She was (very) much against us wearing (those). When I was teenager (we had) Japanese neighbors, (the) Fukudas, and I always wanted to buy (a) Japanese (rice) bowl. One day I bought one, to carry (in my hand and eat, something that) Koreans (do not do). The Chinese (also carry their rice bowls). My mother raised heck with me and said, "Why? What's so good about that?"

So it carried on, my mother was very much against my sisters and brothers above me associating with Japanese or having anything to do with them. And even after I grew up, and was working, she was not too very keen about (my association with) Japanese. However, (her attitude changed). (When) I was working at Ford Island, (my Chinese girlfriend) married a navy chief who was a Caucasian. We also had a very close Korean friend who married a Caucasian chief in the navy. They were so nice. (As) my mother got to know them, she told me, "You know, I guess it really doesn't matter what nationality you are because you can have a rotten (Korean)."

And another thing that really convinced me that she changed her mind was that for a long time when the rice cookers first came out, I bought one. I made the rice (and liked it very much) because (you don't have) burnt rice on the bottom. Whenever we had that brown rice at the bottom, (we had to) boil (it and get it off the bottom of the pot). On a cold day it's okay, you can eat the rice and the hot water. But (on) ordinary summer (days), nobody likes to eat that and eventually, if (my mother didn't) eat it, it (went) into the (garbage). So when I bought that, she snickered and said, "Oh, it's Japanese-made."

Anyway, when I make rice, I use that, and when she makes rice, she uses the pot. One day, (I told her), "Why don't you learn how (to use this rice cooker)? It's so easy instead of having to watch the pot (on the stove)."

She said, "What's so hard about that?"

(Finally) one day, (a) long time later, she said, "I notice (that) we never have any burnt rice (on the bottom, so) we never throw away (any rice now)." (At that time the thinking was to eat everything—we were told), "The children in Korea are starving (so don't waste any rice). Otherwise you're gonna go to hell and God will punish you."

So one day she tells me, "Maybe I'll learn how to make the rice (in the cooker)."

And I said, "Great," to myself. So I taught her how and ever since then she (made) rice (in the cooker and I never heard her say anything about Japanese). Now, her grandchildren married Japanese. So we have a *Haole* (and a Chinese grand)daughter-in-law, (three) Japanese (grand)son-in-laws, (and) one Thai (grandson-in-law). My son-in-law is English, Irish, Hawaiian (and) Chinese. She saw them (all) married, (and by then had already changed her mind about non-Koreans). So we got along very well. She, in her older years found that, everybody is equal. You find good and bad in every culture.

MK: But initially she came with her own . . .

AC: Ideas.

MK: . . . I guess prejudices about . . .

AC: Yeah.

MK: . . . Japanese . . .

AC: Japanese.

MK: . . . because of what she had experienced . . .

AC: Right.

MK: . . . in Korea, and as the years went by she changed her attitude. And in a kind of related way, I know that she came with her prejudices, she came with her medical knowledge, her Korean folk medicine. She came with that. And I think last time you told me that because she was older than many of the other Korean women that came at that time, she also was able to teach the other Korean women how to cook and . . .

AC: (Yes), that's right.

MK: Can you talk about that?

AC: Many of the Korean women out here were picture brides, and they came in the 1920s, I guess the last boatload was 1924. So she was looked up to by these ladies. And all throughout my life, I noticed that my mother (always received) very good comments. She was very straightforward and she was a good woman. And so all of these ladies who knew her (were) very much (impressed with her)—she was a likable person. And then, there were some students that lived at [the Korean Christian Institute]—see, when Dr. Syngman Rhee came out here, he had, back in the nineteen, what, '15, '16, '17, '18—I guess during that time, they were all Methodists. That's right, my mother came here and they had gone to the Korean church, which was the Methodist Korean church [now known as Christ United Methodist Church]. But you know, Methodists have a headquarters. And so at that time, I believe Dr. Syngman Rhee wanted to—I don't know what his real reason was, but he wanted to do something, I think, have only Koreans or a Korean church. But anyway, it turned out that he had a following and they came out of the Methodist church, and then they had their own Korean Christian Congregational Church. And we had—he had followers. And then at that same period of time, he had a school, the Korean Christian Institute for the laborers, (so that) all the Koreans who were out here (would) have a school for their children. I think that's how he put it. We had many, many children at that time attend that school. And then, we had a good friend whose daughter was in that school, and then she also had her friends. They would [all] come over to my mother's home sort of regularly (to) have lunch or dinner. That's how I know that they (thought) very highly of my mother.

Those were the things and my mother spent a lot of time at church with the other ladies, doing relief work, work for the church also. They had two societies at church, it's called the Ladies' Aid Society, which is connected to the church. And then they have the Women's Relief Society, which is sort of like a charitable society. And so she belonged to those two and she organized a club. They called that the *Hyöpp Tong Hoe*. She got (her friends) together and then they said, "When we die, we want to make sure that we have our friends come over (to the funeral)."

And then so they had a club that they formed—I think they paid twenty-five cents a month. Eventually it came up to a dollar. And then what they would do is every time someone died, they would all come to the funeral. They had their own ribbons to identify the members, and they would pay a dollar, I think. And then, that money plus whatever they decided on—maybe a twenty-five dollar wreath. At that time, I guess, it was twenty-five dollars, right, they would (order) a wreath with their name on (it). Up until the time she died that club was still going strong, *Hyöpp Tong Hoe*, and she was one of the founders, yeah.

MK: You know, those two relief or aid groups that she was a member of, at what times would they go into action? The other club helped at funerals. How about . . .

AC: Oh, this was like when they had some kind of relief drive for Korea, clothing drive for Korea, and things like that. And I believe when they had disasters, they would help. And at one time, (during) some kind of disaster they were helping fold bandages, but not as members of the Red Cross. I guess they (Red Cross) must have solicited their help.

MK: You know, at the time that, say, your dad passed away, in 1935, and your mother was left a

widow with a number of children, were there any Korean mutual aid groups that came to help her out? A church group, or anything that was set up that—in the Korean community—that could help someone like your mother?

AC: I don't think they had any kind of aid group that way. So my mother was always joining that *tanomoshi*[-ko]. (She'd borrow a sum of money), then she'd (re)pay. That's how (she managed).

MK: So at the time that your . . .

AC: And she would probably borrow. I remember there was this lady, her husband was in business and she had some money. And so I guess my mother would borrow from her and then pay her. I remember that.

MK: So when your dad passed away, there was no, say, a women's auxiliary group connected with the church that would [help the family] . . .

AC: I don't know. Well, I don't know whether they would have. But you know, at that time when my dad passed away, remember now, (many) Koreans were living in that area, the Pālama area. Many, many, just all over. On King Street they had the [dry] cleaning shop. They had a furniture store. Our friend was an owner of a furniture store. They had all kinds of people living in that area: on Pua Lane, down below, up side, way over across Vineyard Street, then on Kanoa Street, and where St. Luke's Church used to be. Right opposite St. Luke's Church, they used to have cottages over there. Koreans used to live there and Koreans used to live behind Kanoa Street, behind the corner. There's an open market over there now. At the corner of the open market, on the *mauka* side, was where the Korean church used to be. At the corner of Kanoa Street and Pua Lane, (there) used to be a dormitory, single men's apartment. And it was right at the corner, and then they had the church, and then houses along behind there were Korean. So Koreans all over. Across the street of our place was a two-story building owned by a Chinese family.

And then I remember one time they had a fire up there and a Korean family also lived there and the man died, eventually as a result of the fire. (His) son was a U.S. post office worker. And in fact, (the man) was married to a Hawaiian woman, and their daughter used to work at C. S. Wo, I believe, as one of the designers, or interior decorator(s). I remember that family.

And so, when there was death, Koreans just rally around. We had friends---many of those people did not go to our church. In fact, we were one of the only ones going to Korean Christian [Church]. Many of them living there attended St. Luke's Korean church.

MK: And that's Episcopal, right?

AC: Episcopalian, right. And now they're located on Judd Street. Many of those people there are Episcopalian, and I still remember, I meet their children now and then. And during that time, prewar days, when you had (a) funeral, it was (from) six o'clock in the evening, or seven, all night at the mortuary. And the mortuary we were familiar with was Borthwick Mortuary, located on Nu'uānu [Avenue]. Corner of Nu'uānu and, I guess, (School) Street or something. At that time was very strict. We did not (serve) meat. They would have dinner, I mean, food to eat all night. And then I remember they had a little room, and whoever stayed overnight, they would go over there and they'd play *hwat'u*, you know, that Japanese cards [*hanafuda*]?

They'd play (cards) and then the ladies in the kitchen would cook. They would cook only vegetarian. And then the next morning, you would have the funeral in the afternoon, I think. They must have lunch there too, if I recall. When the war broke out, then the evening overnight [wake] stopped, and then only from six to nine, or in the morning. But now, nobody does that (nighttime) hardly ever. I do remember sometimes they do, but now it's either six to nine (in the evening) and burial next day, private. Or now it's more popular now, it's in the morning. Open at nine (in the morning) and then funeral services at eleven, or after lunch. They cater the food during lunch hour. You know, nobody cooks and catering includes all kinds of food now, meat and everything. The tradition is gone of those periods.

MK: You know, you mentioned that in that area in Pālama, Liliha, that place, you had lot of Koreans. And you were in the minority, you were going to the Korean Christian Church, others were going to the Methodist church and St. Luke's . . .

AC: Or St. Luke's, right.

MK: . . . Episcopal Church. How did religious differences affect you and your family? You know, living in that community.

AC: Well, I guess there was nothing serious. I mean, they did their own thing. They go to this morning, five o'clock service. My mother went to church every Sunday as long as she could. Even after she became ninety, she was still going (to church).

She went to church, (but) she could hardly sing. She was not a singer, but she would come home and then she would kind of sing but she couldn't carry a tune very well.

During their prewar days especially, we had this Korean Christian Church being built. I guess it was around 1938, '39, or something like that, '37. But anyway, the church ladies did a lot of work by selling the *taegu*, *kim chee*, and all kinds of things, including *mochi*. They used to have this family up in Pōhaku (Street), the Lees, that owned one of these machines to make *mochi*, the candlestick *mochi* for soup. This candlestick *mochi* is usually used during the holidays, in Christmas and New Year's. And at that time, we didn't have this commercial *mochi*. There was no commercial *mochi* shops for Koreans. You had the Japanese *mochi* (stores). But the only place you could make *mochi* was up at this Korean place. So the ladies would arrange to rent that place, and they'd make *mochi* and sell. But my father had a tree stump, (a) hardwood, and he had carved the inside and made this—what do you call that thing you pound it in?

MK: The mortar?

AC: (Yes.) Mortar. He made that and he also had made that mallet, the long-nosed thing with that handle. My two brothers used to be the ones to pound that. My mother was very good at that, and she was known for her *mochi*. Incidentally, I'll be demonstrating my *mochi* this Saturday and my *koch'ujang*. I learned how to do that, actually, by watching when she was doing that, they pound. They soak the rice overnight and they pound the *mochi*. And then they have a very fine sieve. There's a special sieve for that. Then they make a powder. I watched her during the war. After the war, nobody did anything. (After the war), I noticed that the Japanese had this rice flour (and) *mochiko* in little packets, ten ounces. So I told my mother, "Oh, let's make *mochi* (with the *mochiko*) one day."

After the war we moved and we never took (the *mochi*-pounding mortar). It rotted because many years we didn't do anything. So my mother said, "Okay, let's try."

So I bought the (rice) flour. We tried (and) failed. We (went) through the procedure again, (the *mochi*) still crumbled. So the next time, I told her, "Well, let's mix the *mochiko* in it."

So we tried it, it still crumbled. I said, "Let's put a little sugar." It still crumbled.

So eventually I thought about it and then I told my mother I'm going to use hot water and she flipped. She said, "You can't use hot water."

And then so I said, "Well, I'm going to use this," and it was a biscuit cutter. So I used the biscuit cutter and (cut the rice flour and *mochiko* mixture into the) size of peas. Then I put sugar in there with the water. But, boy, that thing got sticky. So that failed. So finally I said, "Well, maybe the sugar is sticky."

So I did everything with the hot water and flours. Then I put the sugar in after I had put the hot water in and it turned out. So eventually after many, many failures, I came up with a recipe. So I (make the *mochi*) often now, whenever we have church functions, or elsewhere. And so I demonstrated that at the 75th celebration of the (Korean) immigrants' (first arrival in Hawai'i), at Blaisdell [Center]. And then I went to Wahiawā Church. (Later) they asked me to do it at our church. So I did it at our church and I went to Wahiawā Christian Church, and the Methodists wanted to know also. So I went there, and since then I had another demonstration at church. So this Saturday, I'll be demonstrating the *ddök* making. And I also made my own *koch'ujang* which was a formula unheard of. In the Korean style, you use that malt or whatever, that thing that sprouts. They use that as the . . .

MK: Starter?

AC: . . . starter, (yes). When my mother was living with us, normally I would make hot rice every day out of respect, unless she said, "Oh, well, let's eat the leftover." But I do the hot rice, so sometimes we have a little bowl here and a little bowl there (in the refrigerator).

One day, when I took (the rice) out, I realized I had a mixing bowl full. So I told my mother, "Let's make *koch'ujang*."

She said, "How can you make *koch'ujang* with that?" You know, it's not the right rice to begin with, you have to use the *mochi* rice because *mochi* dissolves, but this rice does not. She said, "You can't do that."

So I said, "Well, I hear some people use *miso* and *koch'ukaru*," you know, that pepper (powdered chili), "and just mix it and use that as *koch'ujang*."

So I used *miso* (as the starter), it's the Japanese *miso*, the rice, the red chili pepper, and I put some salt so that it wouldn't get rancid. And I said, "I'm going to put honey."

(Telephone rings.)

AC: And lo and behold, it worked. Excuse me.

MK: I'm going to end right here.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 22-50-2-92

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Agnes Eun Soon Rho Chun (AC)

December 8, 1992

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Agnes Eun Soon Rho Chun at her home in Nu'uau, Honolulu, Hawai'i, on December 8, 1992. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay for today's interview, I'm going to start off with when and where you were born.

AC: I was born in Honolulu on June 9, 1925.

MK: What number child are you in the family?

AC: I am number five of the living, but my mother, when she came out here had six children, so I'm actually number six.

MK: And how many sisters and brothers do you have?

AC: The eldest is a boy, and then another boy, and then two sisters. Then there was this one boy that passed away, just above myself, and then myself. So (there are) two boys and three girls, three sisters.

MK: Okay. And, you know, from what you've been told, where was your first family home in Honolulu?

AC: The only thing I can remember is that my mother used to tell me that we were living across from Likelike School—I forgot the name, Pālama Street or someplace around there. She used to tell us that I was a smart kid. She says, if she remembers correctly, I must have been just about little over a year (when) I would walk to the store and I would buy butter and come home. So my sisters, we all say, "Oh, can't be."

But she says if she remembers correctly, she said that's what she thought that I was very smart at that time.

From there we went on to the next place. I kind of very vaguely remember (it, it was) Akepo Lane. I remember because I (can) visualize the area which is now Dillingham Boulevard. We lived right above Dillingham Boulevard and I remember seeing a grassy [area]. My brothers and sisters used to go down there and then they would talk about catching grasshoppers and frying them and then eating it.

I think the next time I remember very well is when I was at Lopez Lane, that's right back of Tamashiro Market now. We lived there, I remember the two-story building. We lived downstairs. Then just recently, several months ago, whenever I pass that Pālama Street, I saw it torn down and then they put another structure on it. But anyway, from there we went to Pua Lane. I must have been around, in elementary school, maybe around six [years old], no, could be—maybe around older than that, around eight or so, I think, I must have moved there. Because my father passed away when I was nine and we were at Pua Lane and we stayed there. And I went to Ka'iulani School, first grade; second grade, at Robello [Lane School]. And then I went back to third grade at Ka'iulani until sixth grade. And then went on to Kalākaua [Intermediate School].

MK: You know, backing up a bit, you know, you mentioned living in a home that was near Likelike School, then you went to Akepo Lane, then to Lopez Lane, then Pua Lane, yeah. Now, as far as you can remember, what do you remember about, say, the neighborhood around Akepo Lane, if you have any memories of that early, early period.

AC: The only thing I could remember was that in Akepo Lane, the house was sort of a green [color]. But I must have been very young, because I don't remember too much. I kind of remember that we had a stairway going up. (At) the entrance into that place, you had to go through a gate and a little alleyway. But that's all I could remember. The next time I remember vividly is when we were at Lopez Lane and going to Robello [Lane] School. I remember Robello School was two stories. And there was a water fountain up front. I remember we would all come downstairs and we would have to take cod-liver oil. We took our little teaspoon and cod-liver oil, and then, everybody, most all the time, either had orange or *see mui* to take the taste away. I remember that so well in that place. In that Lopez Lane area, another thing that I remember well, is we used to play on the stairway and I had this vaccination on my arm and I kept getting that thing scraped. So even up until today, I have this vaccination, it's really a scar because that scab fell off and then when it got scabbed again, fell off (again). And that's the place where my father was ill. My father had taken different remedies over there, like that melon, and then the dog. I remember we had the kerosene stove and then we have my mother putting that fish, live fish, into that pot. So those are the memories I have over there.

MK: You know, in that Lopez Lane area, who were the people that lived over there?

AC: I can remember our next-door neighbor, this girl (from) a Hawaiian family. They must have been kind of well-off because it was a 5,000 square feet [lot]. They had a nice home, and I know her name was Lovey Kalau. In fact, I still know that family, my sister knows them well because one of the girls goes to the Seventh Day Adventist Church. But they used to live there, and then we had another family called Toda. The fellow was (a) very good friend (of) my brother. There was another family called Han that lived further in the lane. Naturally, we had this family that was upstairs of us. I don't know them that well, but I know of them, they were the Whangs. The mother didn't like the husband's family or something, and when he died, she changed the kids' (family) name to Chun. And then the other family upstairs of us, Korean family, I still know them. Etta and the girls were Betty and Mary. I still get to see them once in a while.

MK: And what was the last name of that particular family?

AC: That was Kim.

MK: And at that Lopez Lane home, were you all renting? The Whang family, the Kim family, your family?

AC: It was all rentals. It was a rental. In fact there was another Chinese family that lived over there, I think, next door or upstairs, I'm not sure. But I still remember them. Lillian and Dorothy, I think. I believe it was Chang (or Ching), if I'm not mistaken. In fact, one of the (boys), Ernest, worked on Ford Island when I was there, so I used to get to see him.

MK: And since . . .

AC: And Pālama, that street, there was a store right (there) facing Lopez Lane, and that store was a Chinese-owned store. (The owner's) name was Chang. (Elsie Chang, a daughter, is a savings and loan company executive.) I remember that very well.

MK: And since all these families were renting the upstairs and downstairs, would you know who the landlord was, or landlord family?

AC: No, I don't know who it was for that area.

MK: And then, among all of these families, how were relations? You know, was it a tight-knit community or just a place that you folks had to come home to eat and sleep and play, or what was it like, the neighborhood?

AC: I think for us, during that time, I only can relate to it as a place to come home to eat and sleep and play with the kids, that's all. I don't know anything more about how the neighborhoods were. My parents were busy and my father wasn't [in] good [health]; my mother, I think she went to work at the cannery while we were there also. I also remember she was taking in sewing from the tailors at that time, that were located on the base at Fort Shafter. I think they had many ready-mades for the soldiers, but many of them didn't want to wear ready-made, so they would go to the tailor and they would be fitted. Then the (tailors) would cut these trousers and shirts and my mother would sew. I think my mother was sewing trousers only. But later on, when my sister was in the eighth grade, my mother pulled her out from school and she [AC's sister] went to learn the trade at the Fort Shafter tailors. She learned how to sew shirts. She was very creative, I think, because right now she does beautiful handwork. She sews all her clothes. In fact she even makes (my) shorts and blouses and clothes. She makes these beautiful appliques. She lives in California now, so I told her, "Gee, if you were living out here, you could make a lot of money going to these craft fairs." Beautiful handwork.

MK: So she started sewing way back when, when your mother used to sew trousers on a piecemeal basis . . .

AC: Right, piecemeal.

MK: . . . for the Korean tailors at Fort Shafter.

AC: That's right. Eventually my brother graduated from high school and he also went into that tailoring business. So he worked for [tailors] and learned how to sew. He was very good also. He eventually went to Pearl Harbor to work, that was before the war [World War II] started. He got a job at Pearl Harbor in the sail loft, sewing. They do repairs to upholstery and all

those sewing things. So he was—they call that sail loft, I guess, I'm not sure, yeah.

MK: So both of your siblings kind of learned their early trade through your mom?

AC: Right.

MK: And so your mom was working at the pineapple cannery and taking in sewing. And your father was not well. So in terms of, say, a neighborhood life, they seemed to be preoccupied with other things.

AC: That's right.

MK: And for the children, you mentioned that you folks would come home and . . .

AC: Right.

MK: . . . play. What did the neighborhood children do for play at Lopez Lane?

AC: I don't remember too well what we did there, all I could remember is that running upstairs and downstairs on the stairway, and nothing more. But I remember at Pua Lane, I was so very upset all the time. We played five-hole marble, and my sister or my mother would call me to pick up the laundry from the line or send me to the stores down on King Street for an errand. I used to get so upset when they would interrupt. We would also play hopscotch. We would put all these pins, safety pins together to make that *kini* right? Another game that we played was *peewee*. We had (a) very small space for yard there, hardly anything. There were six homes enclosed in this area. Just in between the two buildings would be about ten to fifteen feet. And then we'd play in that dirt area. And then another time what we would do is play what they call [stilts], you get your empty cream cans and then we would go into the bushes someplace down by Kanoa Street, and then they have this plant, very prickly with *kukū*. I don't know what it is, but when you pick the bean, and it's green, you peel it and there's this glue-like thing, and then you would put it on the can and then we'd make holes where the holes were. We'd tie with the string and poke it in and then we'd make a long handle. We'd hold onto it with our two feet on the cans and walk, and things like that.

And then they'd have slingshot (made from) rubber tires. We would cut them in little strips and we'd play slingshot. We played boys' games too. See, Pālama Settlement was close by, so we would go to Pālama Settlement. As far as Pālama Settlement was concerned, they had the swimming pool and the kids would go Saturday morning. Early in the morning, they'd have the tank empty and they'd have just very little water, then kids would learn how to swim there. I went several times and I never got to learn how to swim [very well]. I was very afraid of the water.

At one time, Pālama Settlement, I remember, had a big gym. In the gym, they would have lessons. We would have tap dancing, hula dancing, and things like that. And then, I think once a year, they would have (a) sort of carnival. Everybody would perform, they would have clowns. The kids that go there for lessons would perform. I remember that.

I still remember the shower room that they had. I'd go to swim and other kids (would) dive in, but I never, never learned how, so I couldn't dive in. All I knew how to do was hold my nose and jump in the water, and swim from corner to corner, that's about it. Later, they had

a library, and they had a lady (librarian), I remember her so well. She was a tall, skinny, *Haole* lady. And I think her name was Matthews or Matheson. I still remember her. We used to go to the library.

MK: And what did that *Haole* lady do over there?

AC: At the library?

MK: Mm hm.

AC: She would be the one to check in (and check) out the books.

MK: And all those lessons at Pālama Settlement, were they free to the children of Pālama?

AC: Free, I don't remember paying—maybe we paid something, but I hardly remember. Maybe membership, I'm not sure, but all I remember is we were all there, swimming. In other words, that was the rec center for kids. Nowadays, they make special rec centers for these kids and that was our rec center. I still remember some of the people that (went) to swim there. They had swimming meets, and we'd go and watch. I remember the men were on the 'Ewa side shower room and we were on the *Waikiki* side of the pool.

MK: You know, besides the swimming lessons, did you take part in all the other kinds of lessons that were offered?

AC: I took a little tap dancing, I remember, but I never performed. I was very inconsistent, I never wanted to be part of that kind of situation, so I never did.

MK: So at Pua Lane, when you were a kid, you folks had a kind of like a free play . . .

AC: (Yes.)

MK: . . . play with that side, and then you went to Pālama Settlement. Were there any other things happening in the neighborhood, say, among the parents?

AC: Well, you know, during that Pua Lane time, I grew up, I went to Kalākaua [Intermediate School]. When we were going to Kalākaua, I would catch the streetcar. You remember that little thing that runs around now, that (Waikīkī tour streetcar), that colorful one. It looks like that, the streetcar. We rode that, and then later on the trolley came along. I remember, I think, it must have been five-cents fare. We would try to save money and use that carfare for goodies. So from Pua Lane, I used to walk to Kalākaua on Kalihi Street, and come back. The only time I'd ride it, usually, was when I'm late for school, then I'd ride it. But then I remember that, (at) Kalākaua, they sold cookies. They had this beautiful oatmeal and chocolate cookie. And they (were) big, about the size of your palm. I really don't remember how much it was, but it must have been (a) nickel, or three for a quarter, or something like that. But anyway, I always liked (those) cookies, I never had enough of (those). So one day I was thinking to myself when I saw the *Star-Bulletin*, I think they have this editor in the food section that (takes) requests for recipes. I often told myself, "Gee, I wonder if I should write and find out if somebody's got that recipe for (those) oatmeal cookies and the chocolate cookies."

I'm sure I can find lot of chocolate and oatmeal cookies, right, but it's just the idea that (I) identify (the cookies with) that school. I always think about that.

MK: You mentioned that you would save your five-cents fare to get goodies. Besides those cookies that you'd get at school, where else did you spend your money?

AC: When we were in elementary school, I think I mentioned we went to library. We went to the main library. We would walk from Pua Lane to the main library. And as we go along, we would come to this place called Yuen Chong [Co.], on Maunakea [Street], corner of Maunakea, I believe, and King Street. Well, it was on King Street [83 North King Street], this Chinese grocery store (that sold) sundry items. That's where we used to stop by and you know all the seeds were all in boxes. (There were) all kinds of cracked seed, (including) whole plums and football (seeds). All those things. (The seeds were put into) those small little brown bags, and we would buy (those for) five cents. It's almost three-quarters of that bag (of seeds) for a nickel. I believe that my mother used to give me five dollars to deposit, once a month, in my brother's savings account. I think it was either Honolulu Savings or whatever, on King Street, close to Fort Street. Then I'd go on to the library. On the library grounds, there was this tree. I don't know what it is, but it's where that 'Iolani Palace is. This big tree with leaves, big flat leaves, (had) these little fruits or seeds. We would pick that up and I swear the kids were eating that. I vaguely remember that, that's what we used to do every Saturday, almost anyway. That was what our pastime was.

And then going to the Pālama Theater. When I was at Lopez Lane I remember my sister taking me to Pālama Theater. I remember that distinctly. We would go out there in the morning on Saturday and look at those, what do you call those?

MK: Marquee?

AC: (Yes.) They have outside (the theater), you know, (posters) of what was coming. We'd go there. And then once in a while, this was when I was (at) Pua Lane, I think, the Pālama Theater would have free movies for kids. On Saturday they would have (movies featuring) Flash Gordon, or Buck Rogers. Those series. Right after school, sometimes they would have free movies for the kids. I think I told you about this Chandu. One time when I went there, they had this movie, *Chandu*, (about) Chandu the magician. I swear when I looked at the picture, they had this car driving down this driveway into this home, stopped in front of the home, and then this invisible figure would open the door. And that room was misty, fog-looking. I was so scared. I don't know why. When I think back, I thought it was so silly. I was so scared, I couldn't finish the movie. I only remember that scene, and I came home. I remember my sister taking me to the movie. And one time there was a movie called *She*. That's another movie that scared me to death. Until today, when I watch (that) movie it's kind of scary; (when it's) on television, I walk away or I just close my eyes.

Anyway, those were the things that we did when we were growing up (that) I could remember.

MK: And in that Pua Lane area, who were the kids that you played with?

AC: Oh (yes)! Well, (at) Pua Lane we had many kids—in fact, let me see—one, two, three, four—all the families that were living there had children. And there was only one Japanese family, the Fukudas, Hazel, George, Mabel, and Mildred. I still remember, they're much

older than I am. Hazel was, maybe, about two, three years older than I was, but the rest were older. (The other families) were Koreans and we stayed there a long time. There were two, four, six homes lined up. We started in the back, which was a duplex, and then we moved up to the bigger house. After the war, we moved up to the front (home), my mother (and I). So I was very close friends with most of the kids there. There was one house that was kind of transient. People didn't stay in there too long, but I remember the Dunns, the Yangs living there. I remember the Kims in the back, they were there long time, and we moved out before they moved. And then (in) the house in the back, we had the Kwons, and then we had Lees. Actually it was Martha Lee with her husband, Tai Sung Kim. I remember—who else were there? That's just about it, I think, and then we moved out.

MK: You know, I'm kind of curious as to why is it that there were five Korean families congregated in one area. Was it by coincidence or . . .

AC: No, it—no.

MK: . . . how did it happen that way?

AC: No, you see, because, I think, at that time—well, you know, like I told you, up to Kaimukī, was a developed area. Beyond that was the pig farms. And Kāhala, in other words, wasn't existing yet as a residential (area), so people were living between Kaimukī and Kalihi. This Pua Lane area, Kanoa Street, up to Dillingham [Boulevard], there were stores, and lot of Koreans, I can name (many) Koreans that were living (there). There were several Koreans, there was a laundry run by Koreans, a furniture store (operated by) two sets of people, (the) Whangs and the Parks. Next door was the dry cleaning shop, Adam Lee's dry cleaning shop. Then across the street was the Moon family. I think somebody said Jade Moon's dad (i.e., local TV newscaster's father) is Thomas, but I never did confirm that. But his mother and his family were living there, running a grocery store. Then there was another Kwon grocery store. Then there was another Shon, Isaiah Shon's mother was running a grocery store. There was also Ken Kwak—he's with the state (government), yeah, economics. Ken Kwak's grandmother had a grocery store. So we had a lot of Koreans running stores over there.

Within Pua Lane, I remember the Shins living, the Shin family, Shin Hyung Jun. And we had Douglas Cho and his parents. His father was a barber. They were living in Pua Lane. I remember the Kims. (Victoria), I think her name was. Anyway, they were living in Pua Lane. On Kanoa Street, we had a whole bunch of Koreans. Rose Nishida, her mother was Kang, I believe. (The Kangs were) there, I remember. And then (near) the Korean church on Kanoa Street was Maruda and her husband, Kim Chang Soo. Then we had Charlie Choo. We had (a) Choo family there. Then we also had this Lee family, Henry Lee family. Then we also had another family called (Goo), Clara Kim Goo—you know Ah Chew Goo [well-known basketball player and coach]? His mother-in-law, Clara's parents, they lived on Kanoa Street too.

We (also) had this Marjorie, I forgot her name. But anyway, she's related to my very good friend, Jennie Lyum. They were living on Kanoa Street. Then come up this way up Pua Lane, I mean further up to our---see, Pua Lane was not a straight street at that time. (The lane) comes up Vineyard, makes a jog to your left, small jog, and then it (straightens out) and goes straight down to King Street. Right at that jog there was a store, and it was run by that Wah Kau Kong('s family). He was killed (while) in the [U.S.] Air Force, I believe, a pilot. He was killed in the war. I know the Chinese family there, they were the Kong family. Right

next, there was a Korean family, the Lee family. (Then) there was a little lane, I don't know (its) name, but there were many Koreans living in that lane also. There's (the) Elizabeth Kim family, and another lady. I can't remember her name, but I think they were (also) Kims. They lived there. There was a Choi family there. There was another lady called Sara Lee. She was an adopted daughter of this Moses Chung and his mother lived there with his adopted sister, Sara Lee. Sara Lee was the one who had a baby. So when I was fourteen [years old], I (borrowed) her social security card, or the cannery card (since I was then underage), and worked under (the assumed identity of) Sara Lee for three years.

Across the street of that Pua Lane, there was a two-story building, great, big building, and it was owned by this Chinese family. I know (it was the family of) Joyce Wong. She used to work with us on Ford Island too. Joyce's family (or her in-laws), I believe were the ones that owned that place. I don't know. But anyway, there was another Korean family that lived up there. It's a Kim family. I remember he was a postman, and I believe his daughter is or was one of the C.S. Wo designers.

MK: Furniture designer? Oh, interior decorator?

AC: Interior decorator, right. She had a very famous name, and I believe she married a *Haole* doctor. As you came up into Pua Lane, there was Lila Lee and her family. I remember, there was this Mrs. Song and her family. I remember them because I still see her grandson, Jeff Song. (Do) you know Abraham Song? They're all part of that whole Korean complex. Even on Vineyard Street you had Koreans living in Desha Lane. Next to Pua Lane, further down this way was Desha Lane, and you had Koreans. Jimmy Koo and his family (were also there). In fact, I just contacted Jimmy and this sister Eliza because of the mother's picture bride situation, and I just talked with him. And their home is (located in) Desha Lane. And in Desha Lane, there was another family called Sara Lee also. You know, Sara and brother Colin and (sister) Barbara, that family lived in Desha. So it was a small world when you really come down to it and other Koreans I don't remember too well in that place, but they had Koreans living there. (Koreans also resided) on Liliha Street.

So I guess, when they settled, they settled around a Korean church and in the vicinity. So all along Liliha Street, they had Koreans living.

MK: I know that up on Liliha Street, there's the Korean Christian Church, right. And then you have St. Luke's Episcopal Church, which had a Korean congregation.

AC: Right, they were originally on Kanoa Street. Then they relocated up there, on Judd Street. Along Liliha Street, at one time, had many, many stores. Between Vineyard and Liliha, there was a drugstore, Korean drugstore. Across the street, on Liliha Street, there was this (Teuk Soon) Lyum family. Jennie Lyum's father-in-law had a grocery store over there. Coming up this way we had a Liliha Theater at the corner of School and Liliha. We had a Liliha Theater. Along that area, you had Koreans living also. Evangeline Hong, she lived there with her family and Helen Chung and her family lived over there. And Bob Ko, his mother ran a grocery store just right above Vineyard Street.

MK: So Pālama, Liliha, there were a lot of Korean businesses?

AC: (Yes) and School Street.

MK: And homes?

AC: (Yes).

MK: And, you know, I'm wondering, you know, say in your situation where there were six homes in a cluster at Pua Lane was the landlord there?

AC: No. Harry Auld was his name.

MK: Oh, he wasn't Korean then?

AC: No, no, he owned that, Auld family owned that parcel. And next door to us was a parcel of land, maybe 5,000 square feet. But anyway, that parcel of land was (owned by) a Hawaiian family, Carl Saffery, I think was the name, if I'm not mistaken. We moved out from Pua Lane 1950 and went to Aupuni Street. That was when my mother-in-law told us to move in that house [on Aupuni Street] because she bought another place. So we moved into that house because our Pua Lane (home) was going to be torn down eventually. But anyway, several years before they tore down that place, the Hawai'i Housing Authority took over, because they must have bought the land from Auld. He used to come around and collect rent. But then, when—in fact, the rent was—like the duplex was \$16.50, you know, in 1950, yeah. And the two, the four homes that were single cottages, \$17.50. And when the Hawai'i Housing Authority took over, I knew the lady who was working there, Anna (Pahk). She was a secretary. She asked me if I would collect rent. And I believe I was paid ten dollars, ten or fifteen dollars, to collect the rent, every month and take it down to their office, which was located on King Street in one of those buildings by the market, close to the market. I wonder if it was called the Graystone [Hotel] building. But anyway, I was collecting the money and taking it down there. And so I really—up until that time I left. So can you imagine, we were paying \$17.50, the max.

We had two bedrooms. All of the (homes) were two bedrooms, but the duplex bedrooms were smaller. Then there was one home in the center, the one we had lived (in), which was bigger than the other three. (We) had a double parlor, and then two bedrooms, a kitchen and a bath. I remember my father, he was very good with his hands. I would be so scared at that time (because) all the light fixtures were right in the center of the room. You have to go in and turn the switch right? I remember the Lopez Lane home had this toilet with that tank on the top, wooden tank on the top. And I would be so scared to go into the (bathroom).

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: You were just saying that you were scared.

AC: Anyway, so what my father did (about the room lights) was he extended the electrical cord. I just put my hand around it, behind the wall, pull the string, and then I'd go in. And that happened to all the homes that we went into after that. He did all of it. And then so this was the back home and the center home. And then he passed away when we were in the center home. In fact, in that Pua Lane area, right next to the Chinese store, they had a little dirt

road that ran from Vineyard Street up until that Chinese store. There were many, many homes in there too. There were Filipinos living there too. And then in that lane right next to the store, which was running parallel to the homes that we lived in, they had another group of Filipinos living in there too. And they would play music. And we always heard these Filipinos—that's why I'm so familiar with the Filipino music and I like it. And you had Japanese in there, (too). In fact, in that lane, in the corner or someplace, there was a Japanese temple or some kind of religious group that met in there. And then I don't remember too well. And in fact, I remember still this Japanese man would come around with (something that looked like a) big bag and you would give him maybe twenty-five cents and a bowl of rice, and he would puff the rice. We would have a big bag of (puff) rice. That was real fun. Then my mother would make those rice balls, melting the sugar. She knew how to do that and we'd eat that. That was so funny.

In Pua Lane too, we had a wagon. We had vendors that came in wagons. There was one man that sold fish, right by the corner of Pua Lane and King Street. At that corner about two houses away, there was a saimin wagon (in a garage). They would (sell) saimin and they had a table and some benches (for the customers). The (owners) would be up on the wagon, they'd cook the saimin and we'd bring it down (to) the table and eat. It was the best saimin and *udon*. And then I remember this lady who used to live in that Pua Lane extension, in that lane way in the back. In fact, her home was close to the Vineyard Street. Then there was a Korean lady who ran a dressmaking shop. And there was a Korean-Japanese man, he used to drive a taxi. His name was Tanaka. (People) said he was a Korean man who was using a Japanese name because he came from Japan or something like that. Anyway, he was very good friends with the Koreans. And so this guy Tanaka was there. There was a grocery store, they sold fruits. And from there on it was all grassy—(with) some homes. They had some old homes along there. And then they had a good stretch of empty lot that ended up by that dirt road that (is) parallel to Pua Lane.

(There was a lady at the end of the) pathway through that bushes. And then her home was there, but actually you should really go around into her home. She and her husband, he was dealing in junks. He would push (a) cart, he would have a cart and he would go around and collect junk, rags mostly. She would be washing the rags, cleaning it, drying it, and then he would sell the rags, that was his living. But anyway, that lady, (was) very good friends with us. when I was [small] she would always take that little pail, that aluminum rice pail, the *bentō* (container) with the two layers. She would take the bottom one, she'd take it to the saimin place and she'd buy me *udon*. She knew I liked *udon*. So anyway, I remember that saimin place so well. We used to have that.

And then there was this one man. He had that vending truck. My mother always bought papayas from him. He was coming around when we were living in Lopez Lane. My mother would buy papayas by the bushel, like. My mother had so much faith in papaya, she says it was a very good fruit. We always had papaya. Even up until the time when we moved to Pua Lane, the guy would come and then we would buy vegetables from him. This is how we remember that area.

MK: You know, did you folks also frequent the stores in the area, the Korean businesses and the Japanese?

AC: (Yes.) Every afternoon—we didn't have refrigerator, but we had that icebox, remember. So every morning we would have to take the ice in, wrap it up in this rice bag, put it into that

icebox. Every night you have to empty the water. I remember we would have to empty that water into the *laua'e* basket. My father had a good reputation for making these *laua'e* baskets. So we would have several of those hanging. I remember going down to the market every day, almost every day. She would take me with her. So we'd go buy, and I remember she paying like thirty-five cents a pound for pork, pork shoulder. My mother always bought tenderloin, and she always called it "tenderline." I don't know, my mother was really something and like I said once before, we always had this—in spite of us being so hard up, I grew up not wanting anything. My mother made *mandoo* all the time. We also had all the time, this boiled ham. And it's just like the ham that you find in the supermarket in the little packets, sliced ham. That's what it is. We used to eat that, you know. And then, so she'd buy tenderloin, she called that "tenderline." The markets over there sold this tofu. Tofu came in the five-gallon cans in the water. And when you want one, stick the hand in and dig it out. But no longer now because of sanitation. And then poi, poi was in a barrel. And the (storekeeper) had a paddle, you know, like a tennis paddle. (He'd) stick the paddle in and he would make (the pink market paper) into a cone, sprinkle water and then scoop up the poi and slop it in there, you know, just throw it in there. That's how we bought poi. And then, you know this tripe, it was so funny I always saw tripe black. It was black tripe. (They had) the big black tripe, and book tripe too. It was a funny thing, the big tripe, she would come home and then boil hot water and would just scald it quickly. Then she would get the knife and she would scrape (the black part) off. It was black but we would just slick it (off), right, and then we would eat it like that. Many, many years later, white (tripe became available). Now this is after the war, I believe, because that was when I started marketing, right? We used to do most of our marketing at Chun Hoon. I look in there and then I said, "Gee, what kind of tripe is that?"

And he (storeclerk) said, "Tripe."

I said, "Oh, but how come this is white, you don't have the black kind?" (Chuckles)

And the (clerk) told me, "Oh, it's the same kind, but we have to now sell it all cleaned out."

I couldn't believe it.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MK: Before we stopped, we were talking about, you know, your family, your mom going out to buy tripe. And now we're just talking about Liliha and the Korean drugstore . . .

AC: Right.

MK: . . . and the vicinity. Can you kind of . . .

AC: Follow through on that.

MK: What was the name of that Korean drugstore?

AC: Okay. I thought I remembered it for a long time, but I forgot. It was an older Korean man [Shon Do Kyun]. If I talk to my brother, he probably might remember. Around the corner was sort of like a dip, and behind, that's where this teacher—her name was Miss Nishi

[lived], I remember so well. She was one of my teachers. A very thin lady, (with a) big grin when she smiles. She used to live there. And right beyond that area there—where the Mayor Wright [Homes] housing is—was where that gully, was. And right next to it was a fruit store. I think the name was Fujii Store. And then they had this beautiful display of fruits all the time. And that's where everybody went to buy. And then right next door to them had a drugstore, Japanese (Machida) drugstore. I noticed that whenever we used to pass there, I would look in the window because they had this display of different parts of the body that had sores or something, and it was cast into plaster or something. And (it was) real realistic. And so we'd always stop by and look at it. That's the thing I remember about the store.

Then you come on up towards Pua Lane. (On) the corner of this Desha Lane, they had a little store that was almost like Shimaya [*Shōten*]. And then right next to it was the meat market. And then, going up you had another meat market. Then I think there was a restaurant along the way. And then, the Korean vegetable store. Then you had another Korean, laundry lady. Then there was another little lane between the buildings. And then you had this *mochi* factory. And at one time there was a Chinese bakery, I remember. Another sort of like Shimaya store was there too. And long, long time ago they had a little soda fountain. I remember, I sure would like to eat hamburger, but never had money to buy hamburger. I always bought hot dog. There was a store like that. And in fact, even the (David) Kang (family) at one time had a grocery store over there too.

Across the street you had department store at the corner of Akepo Lane. Akepo Lane and King Street, there was a department store over there. I forgot what the name was. I remember going in there, buying some things. And then the old Pālama Theater, next to it was a drugstore. I remember that drugstore so well. I used to go and buy that romance magazines for my sister. She would always send me down there (for other errands, too).

They had a little fountain over there, in that drugstore. I swear I remember eating this taro ice cream, made with taro. Oh, (it) was so good, I always wanted to eat that, but I never had enough of that. I've never seen any taro ice cream since then. But—and in fact, even next door to the drugstore was another (store) sort of like a department store. It was just adjacent to that Robello Lane. And then, one thing I remember about elementary school days was that right next to Ka'iulani School was a Japanese lunch store. I swear, that was the best hamburger I ever ate. I think they had a lot of filling, like bread. But the hamburger was so good. I've never eaten anything like that. He would have the hamburger bun with the hamburger, and instead of lettuce, sometimes they would put blanched bean sprouts.

MK: Oh?

AC: Bean sprouts would be in there, and mustard. And then, you know, bread paper? I guess they must have gotten the bread paper in a roll from the bread store. Bread paper was cut in I'd say, one, two-inch, or three-inch strips, and that's what the hamburger was wrapped (with) and put into the bag.

MK: Oh.

AC: I remember that so well. I guess they would sell stew and rice too. At that time we didn't have plates. I mean, they may have paper plates, but it would come in that, you know, little *okazu* (paper containers)?

MK: Mm hm, the little . . .

AC: Those little cup-like things. That's what they put that stew and rice in there. I remember that so well. When I was going to work (at the Hawaiian Pineapple Co. cannery), when I was fourteen, I went second shift. You know, we took the second shift. I don't remember ever working morning shift. Second shift we'd start, sometimes 2:00, 2:30 [P.M.], or whatever. And then there would be always a radio program called, "*Hilltop House*." We would listen to that at about eleven o'clock. We'd listen to that and we'd go to work. Maybe sometimes they start at 1:30 [P.M.]. Right in that neighborhood, several of us girls, we go together. We wash our apron and cap every night. So we take that. Sometimes the caps, we don't clean it every night, but the aprons we had to. We'd carry our gloves and our aprons and go to work together. We'd come home together. We walked from home through Robello Lane and to the canneries, so was all right. So we really had a good time, working as a group. There (was) always somebody around there that we can play with. Every house had somebody, some kid. I still remember that.

MK: You know, backing up a little bit. You know, you mentioned like the Korean drugstore. I'm just curious, were the drugs in that Korean drugstore . . .

AC: Oh.

MK: . . . Korean, traditional . . .

AC: No.

MK: . . . or American drugs?

AC: I remember, he was an American drugstore. He may have Korean herbs, but I'm not sure. But he was a regular drugstore.

MK: And then, when you talked about the Korean-owned stores that, you know, were around Pālama . . .

AC: Yeah.

MK: . . . were there any items in the stores that were, you know, specifically brought in to cater to the Korean clientele, or just regular local goods?

AC: At that time, we didn't have what they call the real Korean items from Korea. They were not packaged or anything. The only thing I remember from Korea was, there was this man called Mr. Shin. (He) used to do importing from Korea. So once in a while, we'd have this *kim chee*, and (it'd) come in these big barrels, great big barrels. He'd have it on a truck, and we'd go out, my mother would go out and buy the *kim chee*, I never saw turnips that big. And this is what we see now, the Korean turnips. Big turnips like that. And that's what he used to sell, and the cabbage. By the time the cabbage *kim chee* came here, was real sour. But it was so well preserved that it wasn't rotting, you know, it was preserved. But anyway, I still remember that, and I just love that taste of it. But anyway, he was the one that was importing some things. And at that time, there (were) no health restrictions, I'm sure. He would bring in those, just like that *bagoong* thing for *kim chee*. My mother would buy.

But (for) grocery stores, I remember Mrs. Kwon used to run (one), and Mrs. Moon, Thomas Moon's mom, and George Kwon's mother. And I guess Isaiah Shon's mother, and this Ken Kwack's grandmother. And this Esther Kang's mother-in-law. They all sold whatever we had, like canned goods. And more on the vegetable side. And you know, like Mrs. Kwon, I know her very well, very good friends of ours. She had the grocery store before the war, because when the war broke out, she had her son, Bill Kwon, who is the sports editor, at our house. He was ill. So during the wartime, he stayed with us a few months or so. That's right. She had the store and she would go early in the morning. She told me, real early in the morning. And she didn't have a car. I don't think she had a car at that time. She would just go with her cart to River Street and bring the vegetables, if I'm not mistaken. So that's how they did. They didn't have somebody to deliver their vegetables to you.

MK: She sure worked hard.

AC: She really worked hard, yeah. They all worked hard over there, during those times. In fact, they were the, I guess, better-off people because they could afford to buy a business.

MK: Another thing you mentioned was—you know, you mentioned that there were some Filipinos living nearby and then you also mentioned like the Fukudas and some other Japanese now. Were these other ethnic groups kind of separated or—what was it, in terms of ethnic groups, were they placed? Like were there Japanese clusters, you know?

AC: (Yes.)

MK: Or were they all dispersed with everybody else?

AC: No, (the) Fukuda family just happened to be there. But we never were, I guess, as a family, close. They were just living by themselves and we were too. But, I knew Hazel [Fukuda] because she was little older than I was, I knew the sisters, but everybody was doing their own thing. And just next to the Saffery home, going down towards King Street, there was a big Japanese camp [cluster of homes occupied by Japanese]. When you drive into that area, they had a big area in there and then homes around. They even had a bathhouse in there. And talking about the bathhouse, there was a—that's right, there was a bathhouse on King Street, you know, close to that drugstore [Machida Drugstore, 528 North King Street] there. Oh, in fact, there was another drugstore coming up toward Pua Lane (called Takaki Sanyō-Do). He relocated.

MK: That would be Takaki Sanyō-Do?

AC: Oh, Takaki Sanyō-Do, yes.

So anyway, they had this bathhouse there, and you know, in those days, my mother was very anti-Japanese. The other ladies and the other girls (were) going to go bath. So I told my mother, "Let's go."

Once in a while, she'll go and then I'll go with her. But she never wanted me to go more than necessary, I guess. Once in a while, she'd go, hardly. So when I went a few times, I remember, was fun. They had the bathhouse divided in two—ladies, one side on the right, the men on the left. And I noticed right in between the partition, there was this cement, square cement, (with) cold water running. In between the partition, (was) that thing. And then the

pipe on one side, and ours one side, but you cannot see the other side, because it's men, only the water running. Against the wall, as you enter, there's this big cement tub. So everybody would get (a) basin, it's an aluminum basin. You pick up the basin and then you wash yourself outside and rinse. After (this prewash) you can go into the (hot) tub. The next time I ever had that kind of experience was when I went to Korea. We'll talk about that later.
(Laughs)

MK: And so, you know, you had Japanese—there were Japanese camps . . .

AC: Yes.

MK: . . . within Pālama. And, you know, you mentioned that at that time, your mom was a little prejudiced against Japanese.

AC: Right.

MK: Now, how was it—how would you characterize the relationships between the Koreans in Pālama and the Japanese in Pālama?

AC: I don't know that we had any kind of interaction that much, you know. Even with the neighbor next door. (We) hardly (knew) them.

(There were) some Chinese living across the street (in) a complex (of) apartment(s). (It) was an L-shape (two-story) apartment (with) another separate home in the front. (Next to) the corner of that jog of Pua Lane, there was another Chinese family, and they were related (to the owners of the apartments). Most of (the apartment dwellers) were Chinese. I knew only (three) Korean (families) who lived there at one time or another. I don't know what year it was but (there was) a fire (that burned the) L-shaped apartment, upstairs and downstairs. (An) old Korean man, (a) postman's father, was burned. I think (he) died as a result of that (fire). (At one time) the Chung family (lived) there, Molly (and Johnny). (Another family who lived there was the Grace, Bessie, Kenneth and John Kim family.)

MK: I know you mentioned earlier that there were also Filipinos.

AC: (Yes.)

MK: And you used to listen to their music.

AC: (Yes.)

MK: Were they all bachelors or with families?

AC: I think most of them were bachelors. I don't remember seeing any women. And they all lived together. We just (greeted them) as a young kid, we never spoke to them (at length). (In) that complex behind the store, as you come into the lane, we had some Koreans living (there). (Family of Kee Soon Choi) and Moses Chung and his mother.

MK: And how about part-Hawaiians?

AC: (Yes.) We had Hawaiians and Portuguese in that complex (and) further in this road. A real

mixed group (lived) over there. The only Korean living in there was the lady who bought me the *udon* when I was ill.

MK: And then, yeah, still kind of backtracking a little, I remember you were mentioning that for the Korean community, churches were very important. What church did you attend?

AC: (I always attended the Korean Christian Church which is now located) on Liliha Street. Our church on Liliha was built (around) '37, a brand-new church right (above) Kuakini (Street). Prior to that time, we had (a) church where the (Korean) Care Home is now (located) at 1526 Liliha Street, (diagonally across McDonald's on Liliha Street). (It is) located in a lane. (The old church complex contained) an apartment building two stories (high for four families and a low rise for bachelors). (The church was) a long wooden building (with a small space) downstairs (which they) used (for the) Korean-language school (and) Sunday school. When (the church) bought that new property, (all the buildings were demolished and) they built the Korean Care Home. (Actually, all the buildings were on that portion of the property condemned by the state [of Hawai'i] for the building of H-1 Freeway.)

MK: And let's see, shall I stop here, and then when I come back, I'll pick up with church activities . . .

AC: Okay.

MK: . . . things that you remember, yeah.

AC: Okay. (Chuckles)

MK: Stop here.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 22-51-3-92

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Agnes Eun Soon Rho Chun (AC)

December 16, 1992

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Agnes Eun Soon Rho Chun at her home in Nu'uuanu, Honolulu, O'ahu, on December 16, 1992. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay. For today's interview, we're just going to continue with your discussion of your years in school. And we'll start from the beginning, the first school that you went to, Na Lei Kindergarten. Where was it located and what do you remember about Na Lei Kindergarten?

AC: I remember Na Lei Kindergarten's location. It's right next to the Ka'iulani Elementary School (on North King Street, in Pālama) and in the rear of the fire station. It used to be an old fire station, but I think it's no longer there. And the building [i.e., fire station] is very distinctive, it has some kind of red brick border (on the front). And I remember, through (a) picture, I still have of us as a group. It was May Day celebration (photo and) I had a Korean costume on. I remember (making) paper hat, (that) look like army caps. I remember everybody (wearing) it (with one end at) the tip (of) your forehead to the back (of the head). But I wanted to be different. I wanted it to look nicer so I (wore mine with the ends right above my two ears). I remember, faintly though, we used to have white paper, brushes, and paint. I still remember (the) teacher that appears in that photo.

MK: You know, like what ethnicity were the children and the teacher?

AC: The children were (mostly) Orientals and you had Filipinos and maybe Portuguese, and that's just about it. I don't remember seeing any *Haole* kids. And the teachers, as far as I could remember, that one teacher was a sort of *Haole*-looking. She almost looks like a Portuguese lady, but I think she must have been a *Haole*-Portuguese, or—well, Portuguese nationality is considered Caucasian anyway.

MK: And so you were there for your kindergarten?

AC: Just for kindergarten at Na Lei, and then from there on we went to Ka'iulani [School]. I could remember the teacher's face, but I can't remember her name. She was a Hawaiian woman, either first or third (grade). (We did not have) tables and chairs, we (had rows of seats attached together that had tops with compartments). We had a monitor system and had to stay after school to sweep the floor. (We sprinkled) sawdust (on) floors (which) were all oiled. (We swept the) sawdust, (and used) foxtail brushes (to sweep under the seats). We had to take out (the erasers and clap the chalk dust). We clean(ed) the eraser board. I remember

we would sleep (on straw mats) in between (the rows of desks). I remember (being) in the health class (in my fourth grade). There was an exchange teacher from the state of Washington, Spokane. And I remember her name was Miss Rawlins. (As) we were in the health class we (had) these little paper (weight) charts. We had to have milk every day and had graham crackers to go with it. I distinctly remember that fourth grade.

(I remember going) on an excursion to Hind-Clarke Dairy (at what is now) 'Āina Haina. We (were transported) on a truck. (Not in buses.) Everybody (was standing up holding on to each other and the rails). This is how we traveled to our excursion places. Miss (Elizabeth) Tseu, T-S-E-U, (was my fifth-grade teacher). Then I had Mrs. (Mary) Preston in the sixth grade. We experimented in the sixth grade, making health soup, a vegetable soup, right in class. In the sixth grade I was in the main building (on the second floor). Up until the fifth grade, we were out in the cottages.

I remember we had (lunches served in) tin plates (at the) cafeteria. (At) the cafeteria, the teacher (sat) at the head (of the table and) we all (sat) on the benches on (both sides). When(ever they) had lamb stew, I couldn't eat the lamb stew. It was so smelly, I just couldn't (eat the stew). And I would never—I just left it sitting. I (would) just (drink) the milk and I think we didn't have graham crackers except for break time. And I remember recess. We had milk in bottle(s). The milk always had this thick cream, about two inches on the top. What we would do is put the straw in, drink up (most) all the white part (on the bottom) and then when it came down to almost about a half, we would shake (the bottle which was covered) with those milk caps. (A) curd (is formed) on the top of the bottle. It sticks on the bottle cap. So we would take off the bottle cap, and rub it on the graham cracker (like butter) and ate.

MK: Oh.

AC: (I remember) Lois Nakayama was a very good friend of mine. I think she went to Central [Intermediate School] and I went to Kalākaua [Intermediate School]. Many years later, when I was working at Ford Island as the comptroller (for Commander Third Fleet), I had dealings with the office that she was working. It was so long ago (but) I still remembered she and I played (very well). (My) classmates (were) Donald Ching, state senator, (and) Albert Alfonso, who became the first Filipino West Point cadet. (Ralph Miwa was also my classmate.) From Ka'iulani I went to Kalākaua and on to McKinley [High School].

MK: Right, right.

AC: You know Ralph Miwa?

MK: Oh, yeah. [Dr. Ralph Miwa, a political science professor and administrator at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, was also a prominent member of the Democratic Party.]

AC: Ralph Miwa was so smart, I remember distinctly, he skipped a grade in elementary.

MK: Gee, so in that school you had a lot of people who later on became really influential.

AC: I think so. I remember them very well because we were together in the classes.

MK: And like, you know, you remembered like Lois Nakayama, Donald Ching, Ralph Miwa—who else did you kind of associate with back then, or what types of classmates were you

associating with?

AC: Others that I remember was this girl, Mildred Luke. I (met) her (again) at (the U.S.) Naval Supply Center [at Pearl Harbor]. She was one of the administrators over there. And then there's another girl, her name was (Wai) Hin Pang, (she also worked) at Pearl Harbor. We had some other Korean children that I went (to school) with, like this Lim boy, Pyong Yul Lim. And then we had another one, this Lee boy. I still know (a) Filipino girl—I still remember their names. And Haruko and Hanae (who) were (twins). Fukunaga (was their last names). I still remember (many of the names) when I look at those pictures.

MK: And you know you mentioned like shaking up the milk bottle and eating the cream at the top on your graham cracker. Nowadays children are playing milk bottle cap games.

AC: (Yes.)

MK: In those days, what did you folks do?

AC: We saved those milk caps too. You stack it up (two, three, four and so on) and then you're supposed to hit it (on the top). (Any that turned over, you kept.) I kept a whole bunch and I just threw it away (when I got older).

(Laughter)

AC: We had milk delivered to our home too. And so I had (milk caps). And at that time, milk was not homogenized so you have the fat on the top. When Marcus [AC's son] was born in 1951, we (still) had that Guernsey (milk). The Guernsey milk was supposedly more rich.

MK: And so you play like milk bottle cap games—what else did you folks do around school?

AC: We played *peewee*. (The) little broom sticks (were) cut in different lengths and different shapes. And we played marbles. (We played) jump rope. That was one of the very popular recess games that we had.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

MK: I guess we can continue with that discussion of what used to do for play. You know, you mentioned the milk bottle cap games, jumping rope, *peewee* . . .

AC: Marble.

MK: . . . marbles. Were there any other things that you folks used to do?

AC: Actually, during the recess hours (there's) not much time. And even if it was during lunch hour it really wasn't much. So most of the time, that's just about it and there was no directed games or anything like that. We were just let out and we did whatever. And then when the bell rang, we just went in. So that's all I could remember.

MK: You know, during the lunch hours, I know you mentioned like school lunch where you disliked the lamb stew, did you folks bring home lunch?

AC: I don't remember taking home lunch myself, but maybe when I was in Kalākaua, a few times. But most of the time I was a cafeteria person. I remember (the) stringbeans with ground round and tomato sauce or tomato (at Ka'iulani). And it was so good. That's one of the dishes I never forgot. And in fact, I even tried making it after many, many years (and) that's one of my favorite (dishes). Oh, and they always had, I think, that macaroni or spaghetti. And it was baked spaghetti. I always didn't like baked spaghetti because that's what we ate before. When I started making spaghetti, we always pour the sauce over. When I think about it now, I like (the baked spaghetti). I started to bake because I have a good friend, Salome Han, and she periodically calls me up and she tells me (to pick up a pan she baked). Salome is like now eighty-five [years old], I think, and she's still baking.

(Laughter)

AC: And so I got to liking it that way.

MK: You know like during the lunches there, you were being served American food, yeah, American fare as opposed to the dinners or lunches that you'd be served at home by your mom. I'm wondering how did you feel about, say, having American food as opposed to the food that you'd have at home?

AC: I never had any kind of feeling. It was just there and I just ate it. I don't think I ever thought of that. And in fact, it was so funny, one incident. I remember this so well. We sat right on the benches and the teacher sat up front. She periodically comes down and looks to see whether we're eating. And we always had bread and butter, the two pieces (of triangles). One day, (the teacher) came and (said to this boy), "Why aren't you eating the meat?" She said, "That's good for you, you know."

He had a funny grin on his face because he liked the meat, chunks of meat, he was leaving it for the very end. And here she thought he was sorting them out because he didn't want it. She just assumed that he didn't like the meat. But the stews were good. That's right, I remember (we had) stew, stew and rice. That was good.

MK: Another question I have is, you know, for a lot of the nisei Japanese, school was an adjustment for them, or something new to them because they came from homes where their parents spoke Japanese. Now, in your home you have two parents who are Korean immigrants, how was that for you?

AC: Okay. As far as I can remember, my mother never spoke English. I understood what she was saying, in that baby way, but I never had any problem. She spoke Korean and I—my brothers and sisters, we all spoke English. I don't know about those Japanese children, I didn't observe. Talking about home lunch, they did. Many of them came with (the) *bentō*(s). You had that aluminum looking *bentō*. (On top of the *bentō*), diagonally, they had this little slot for the two chopsticks. But it was (the) metal chopsticks. I remember that and invariably you'll have *takuan* and *ume*. And sometimes the kids have this *musubi*. I never knew what that was, until recently when they (advertised the) Spam *musubi*. I don't remember seeing the round ones. (I remember) the flat thing with that *nori* wrapped around, and then they would have a little *ume* in the center. And sometimes just the plain rice, there's never a round ball. Not too long ago I found out that you never make rice balls round. That's for funeral. But for us at home, Koreans, I always made round balls because we didn't know any better, I mean, that's not our custom.

MK: You know, with your parents speaking Korean at home and your learning Korean as your first language at home, how was that in learning English in elementary school and. . . .

AC: I (don't) think I had any problem. When I went to Kalākaua [Intermediate School], I remember this teacher, a Dutch woman. She was the one that (taught us) phonics. And I learn(ed) from her those little what-you-call, diphthongs they call that and whatever. The short and the "ah" and "ay." She was good at it and she taught us (well). I still remember her.

MK: Oh, before we go to Kalākaua, you know, you mentioned Robello [Lane] School in a prior conversation and we were talking about it earlier. Since there's very little mentioned about Robello School, tell me about Robello School.

AC: Well, Robello School was at the end of the lane [at 951 Robello Lane], and as you go to the end of the lane, I think there was a little bit more of that lane down to Dillingham [Boulevard]. But anyway, when we were going to Robello, it was on the left-hand side, (a) two-story building. And I remember the teacher I had there. I remember in her class, we used to bring empty cereal boxes, empty cans with the labels on, and we'd play store. And another thing that I remember over there so distinctly is that we had to all have cod-liver oil. Every day we would have this—big, maybe it was like a pint-size medicine bottle, the cough syrup bottle. It was cod-liver oil, 100 percent cod-liver oil. Oh, that thing was so stink, I tell you, it smelled so bad. And you want to vomit. But we'd hold our noses, hold our breath, we'd take the teaspoon and we'd go outside by the water fountain, stand in line and she'd pour this (into our spoons). We'd take the cod-liver oil and most of us had something like *see mui* or orange we brought from home to eat right away after that to take the taste away. Oh, but that was the thing I remember about that place.

MK: What was the purpose of giving children cod-liver oil?

AC: Well, I think we were underweight that's why. Maybe you call that malnutrition, I don't know. But I was always tall for one thing, and I always was underweight. And so, as far as I can remember, up to high school, when I went to McKinley High School, I was in the rest class. They put me in P.E. [physical education] for a few weeks and then they catch up with me again. And then (they'd) pull me out of P.E. and into the (rest class). We spent one period sleeping on the cots at McKinley.

MK: And so it was only children who were . . .

AC: Underweight.

MK: . . . underweight got sent . . .

AC: Underweight.

MK: . . . to a rest room to rest?

AC: I don't know what criteria they used, but I was underweight so I always ended up there.

MK: How did you feel about being sent to the rest room?

AC: Was good because I hated P.E. anyway. You get sweaty. And I ended up in Kalākaua too, going to P.E. for a couple of weeks until they caught up with me. I never liked sports. So for me (it) was good (to) take a nap. But then, let's see now, I think what had happened was that when I was (at) McKinley, I stayed in the rest class, but then I got a job. I applied for that NYA, [or] National Youth Administration (job). It's a government-subsidized program and you got (paid). You worked the one period instead of going to the rest room. I went there to help in the library. So it was good. I got paid and I didn't have to go to P.E. (Laughs)

MK: You know, you mentioned you went to Kalākaua. Where did all the kids come from to go to Kalākaua in those days?

AC: All the Pālama kids went to Ka'iulani, (from the) Vineyard Street area. And then, I think, from Liliha Street (to King Street) went to Kalākaua. And then, (across) Liliha, (the) downtown side, went to Central [Intermediate School]. But then, when we went to Kalākaua, some of the kids went to Central Intermediate. We went to Kalākaua and I think the Kalihi kids, (too). I remember (some of) the (Kalākaua) teachers. I had a homemaking teacher, Leatrice Ing, and I really admired her, well-dressed. She always wore those linen dresses. And then, another one was Mrs. Hope Park, she was also (a) homemaking teacher. And then there (were) Mrs. Bertha Loui and Mrs. Lena Among).

A very good math teacher (at Kalākaua was Glenn Harada). One art teacher I remember is Reuben Tam. He became a famous artist (locally and abroad). And there was a very popular teacher at Kalākaua, Mr. (Mitsuyuki) Kido. I don't think I was there when he was there, but I remember him so well because my sister, Violet, was at Kalākaua, five years ahead of me. And they were in (his) newswriting class. And then, anyway, she became—she's very, you know, she can talk very well. (Chuckles) And then so she entered, I think, as Kalākaua School representative. I think there was a *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* oratorical contest. I remember going to listen to her. Where it was, I don't remember. But she was one of the contestants representing Kalākaua.

MK: Do you remember how well she did?

AC: I don't remember. And when I asked her, she laughed. She said, "Oh, I don't even remember that now." (Chuckles) You know, she just said that. But I remember.

MK: Funny you should mention Mr. Mitsuyuki Kido because he was a teacher there and later on he became very active in the . . .

AC: Business.

MK: . . . Democratic Party . . .

AC: Oh, and business.

MK: Yeah.

AC: And John Reinecke was at Kalākaua when I was there. I remember.

MK: What did you think of him, back then?

AC: Well, I don't know too much. And later on, you heard that he was Communist, card-carrying Communist or something like that. I just related to him as a teacher, although he was not my teacher.

MK: And, you know, when you went to Kalākaua, you had these Kalihi kids coming in and you folks were the Pālama kids. Before when I've talked to Kalihi people, they really had a sense of being Kalihi, as opposed to being . . .

AC: Pālama.

MK: . . . Pālama. How was that?

AC: I don't know. I just went to school, did my business and I had no special feelings about being (from Pālama). So I was kind of, maybe, a loner. I never really bothered.

But anyway, com[ing] back to [the subject of] Kalākaua, I think we did monitor work, but it was not sitting down—I mean squatting and then using the foxtail to clean out between the aisles, under the seats. But in Kalākaua, I remember the cafeteria and I believe we were assigned to do cafeteria work. I don't remember in the elementary school, but I think in Kalākaua we did. And then I remember eating this oatmeal cookies and the chocolate (cookies). I mean chocolate, just plain chocolate cookies. And every time I eat oatmeal cookies, I said, no this is not the recipe, it doesn't taste the same.

(Laughter)

AC: And even the chocolate cookies. And they were the shape of the big cookies now you find in the health store, that big size of a palm. And so was three for twenty-five or ten cents one, or something like that. So someday I would like to get a recipe for that.

MK: Yeah, so when you were going to like Kalākaua, did you ride the streetcar or did you walk?

AC: No, to Kalākaua I rode. Most of the time, I guess I rode because I was late, you know, in the morning. I'm a late sleeper, so I would ride. But many, many mornings I walked and many more afternoons I walked back. As long as I didn't have to go to Korean[-language] school. So that was the routine.

But anyway, when I went to Kalākaua, I decided I wanted to go to McKinley [High School] because Farrington [High School] had just opened not too many years [earlier]. So I used my brother's address, they were living across from Central Intermediate School, that was Vineyard Street, right next to the Central Intermediate School. (On) Vineyard Street right across Central, there was this Leilani Court, a group of homes and apartments, that my sister-in-law's mother owned. That's where (the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] and) playground is now.

MK: Oh, I see.

AC: That's how I ended up in McKinley.

MK: You know, when you were like an intermediate school student about to go to McKinley, did you have any aspirations, any plans for the future, any hopes for the future?

AC: I don't know. It's a funny thing, but I had no plans. I didn't think of being a teacher or nurse, or, I just never thought about what I wanted to do. It never came into my mind. So when I went to McKinley, the first teacher I had was Mrs. [Hugh] Harding-Jones, oh no, I had a---well, I was in a different class first when I transferred. They told me to go to this other class, then they transferred me to Harding-Jones' class, and then I found out that when I was transferred from Farrington, they had the records there. And then later on when they screened the records, they put me in Harding-Jones' class. And they had what you call this XY and YZ kind of grouping. So I think they said our class was XY, which is the better students, so I went into that class. So I was transferred, maybe not quite a month later, into (Mrs. Harding-Jones' class).

MK: And, you know, when you went to McKinley, did you pursue a particular course of study?

AC: Well, when I first went I had, for sophomore [year], most of it was required, what do you call, core studies, which is English and social studies. Then I took algebra and I took biology. Biology was required, but not algebra. I was really stupid though. I wasn't that sharp math person. I (got) into that algebra class and had a good teacher. This is my experience in that class. We go to the board (to do one problem assigned as) homework. I stand there because I don't know (how to work the problem). She comes to me and (asks), "Oh, Agnes, are you having problem?" Then she'd help me.

But this is how I went through that class. So algebra, I didn't like. Biology wasn't too bad. But anyway, I passed algebra.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

AC: Okay, so I said I passed algebra. And then I signed up for geometry and French (in my junior year). So I went in the class. I just couldn't make it. I just felt so dumb in that class, that French class, so I dropped French and I also dropped geometry. (But) they wouldn't drop it for me, they made me go (to) see Miles Cary, Dr. Miles Cary (the principal). Can you believe?

MK: Oh!

AC: I had to go to see him and give him a reason why I wanted to drop. I thought I could just drop it through the administrative office. They made an appointment for me and then I had to go (to) see Dr. Cary. Oh, I couldn't believe it! So I had a nice chat with him. He was so nice to me, but I told him, "On second thought I think I'd better think about working." I told him, "I'm having a hard time in those classes and if I really put my mind to it, I think I'd probably be able to, but I'm going to have to, after graduation, help the family and not think about university." Can you believe that's what I thought?

So then, he said, "Okay."

And then, I went into this typing class and shorthand (class). Junior year, I had Mrs. Janet Landgraf. She was my core studies (teacher). And then, the war [World War II] broke out on

December 7, so we didn't go to school. We helped with the registration, fingerprinting and so forth. And then, in January sometime, my brother-in-law was working (at) Ford Island [Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard] at that time, so he (said), "Oh, we're hiring kids to be messengers. Would you like (a job)?"

I was sixteen at that time.

I put in my application (to start work) on February 2, (1942). (However,) they're going to open school again (on the same day) I'm going to go to work. So I decided to go to work instead. I went to work [as a messenger] on Ford Island, and in the meantime, (my class of 1943 graduates). And so now—oh, wait, okay, we're not going to talk about work now. (Telephone rings.) Right? You don't want me to talk about work yet.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MK: You know, I want to move back a little bit and, you know, go back to your McKinley School days and, like you mentioned, core studies. That's something that was very progressive, very revolutionary at that time. What was it and what did you think about it, as a kid?

AC: My exposure to this core studies, I don't know whether I'd be very pessimistic about it or—I see some good in it, but I hate to run down a system, not being an expert. What I think about it is this, during that period I was in core studies, in that sophomore year, we had scholastic, or what was that, *World Observer*? No, the *American Observer*. The *American Observer*, and then we had our textbooks, too. We also had *Macbeth* or whatever, the literature thing. But we didn't spend too much time on any subject if the teacher didn't care for that particular subject. I don't know how to graph, you know. In all my classes, maybe during Kalākaua years, we did have, what you call, that English, you know, this . . .

MK: Oh, diagramming sentences?

AC: . . . diagram, sentences and so forth. I had a little bit of that, but as of today, grammar, I'm dead. I think these foreign students that come learn grammar that way in the foreign countries. Well, when they talk about those things, I hate to admit it, but I don't know. Because I never was forced into it. Even like Kalākaua, you had the same teacher (for) English and social studies, which was almost like core studies. It was no different, only thing we called it English and social studies, two periods with the same teacher. So when you talk about American history, world history, I'm dead. I don't know much about American history. That's why I (kept) telling my husband, that I (want to) read his book(s). And he (always) said, "You should read."

But every time I pick it up and I'm reading, I'm falling asleep. (I guess the) university world history books (are much) too advanced for me, at this moment, not knowing the basic. Well, I even went through the motions. I ordered this Time-Life [series] (of) American history with (twelve books and records). This was when I was working, so I was busy raising a family and I never had time to [read]. I guess if I really wanted to, okay. That's why even when I think back, I took the GED [general equivalency diploma] test when I was working. I remember distinctly it was 1955, someplace close to that and I took that (University of Hawai'i) accounting course. And the course was held at (Navy) Supply Center (and the) university people [instructors] (came) over. But I didn't finish it, I got pregnant. I got sick, (and) I couldn't (go) to work, so I dropped the course. I try to and I want to, but I (only) have a very

extensive list of non-credit courses.

But anyway, going back, that's during work time, when I had this American history records and book, I never really applied myself to it. I feel, even today, I'm always complaining but I never did something about it, but I would sure like to. [Even] when watching TV, and they're showing a picture about the wild West or whatever, I cannot relate to that as my husband knows when he's watching. It comes back to them, all of these. Even like the Bible. I went to Honolulu Bible Training School for about a couple of years or so, and I don't even remember what I learned over there. I'm now, what, sixty-seven, and I still never really found out about (the) Bible until our pastor came about two years ago. Now I'm picking up and it stays in my mind.

[In high school] we had in classes group discussions, and we'd plan for our banquets. I planned for our sophomore year banquet (held at the) Honolulu Merchandise Mart (building), it's torn down now. The Merchandise Mart had the (old) YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] there. I remember going over there, to the YMCA, to make arrangements to have our banquet, when I was in the tenth grade. We formed committees. And I think I learned a lot of things through the discussions in that class. And rather than remembering dates of American history you might have another core studies teacher, or English and social studies (teacher) who likes English, maybe that's what you're going to be exposed to all the time. I don't know what their classroom plans were or what they had to show, but that's the kind of experience I had when I was going to Mrs. (Landgraf's class). I only had her for, September, October, November, three months, and she was into history. She was very aggressive too. She was one of the good teachers too. Harding-Jones was also (a good teacher). But they operate(d) differently. There were two (brothers who were) teachers (at McKinley). One was Keith (Jackson) and one was Archie (Jackson). I think both of them were math teachers. I had Keith (Jackson as my geometry teacher). My biology teacher was Miss [R.] Millington.

MK: How were you as a student?

AC: I think I'm (an) average student because I never really studied. And even today, when I have any kind of project, I'm a procrastinator. I'm always doing it at the last minute. If I applied myself to these things, I think I would be a better person today. I'm always—even now—I'm always last minute writing minutes. I said to myself, how much better if I spent more time in writing the minutes and give a better product. And that's how I got by in school. When I see these kids nowadays, they put in a lot of time studying, and I guess that's the only way you can get ahead. But to me, I just slide through all the way.

MK: You know, I notice that, you know when you said you went to see Miles Cary, you told him that, well, you thought you'd have to go to work because of your family situation. You know, in those days, did many girls continue on to, like, high school?

AC: I don't think so because at that time, my sister was five years ahead of me. She had gone to university [University of Hawai'i] two years. We couldn't make it, so she went to work. She had to work and then she was working for the Kim furniture. I don't know where else she worked but it was hard for her. Knowing that we were struggling, I didn't feel I was interested (in higher education). I don't know why they sent me to the principal, but maybe he wanted to salvage me. Maybe he thought I had potential. But I don't know, maybe that was what they normally did, send you to the principal before you can drop courses. But it

turned out for the good, because the war broke out and I ended up anyway, you know, because of that class, the typing and the. . . I had typing in, I think was ninth grade, at Kalākaua. So I just took advanced typing, and then shorthand for the first time, I think. I don't think I had shorthand at Kalākaua. In the meantime, when the war broke out, because we were in those classes, they asked us if we would help with the fingerprinting. In October of 1943, (we were asked if we wanted to return to school for four periods). (My class graduated in June 1943 but) I wanted to go back to school, so I went. And that's how I ended up getting a diploma. And I continued shorthand and typing again. All I had was core studies in the morning and shorthand and typing, and then we quit at eleven-thirty and we went to work. That's how I got my diploma, so basically, I don't have any kind of real, solid background as far as college material is concerned.

MK: You sure got solid background in preparing you for your future. You know, before we get more to World War II . . .

AC: Right.

MK: . . . and your career, I just have a couple more questions dealing with your education. You mentioned going to Korean-language school, what was the name of the school?

AC: Oh, they called that the—if I recall correctly, Shin Hyung Korean School, language school, Korean language.

MK: What do the first two Korean words mean? Is it a name or . . .

AC: I don't know. But the language school I went to was located, actually, on School Street. Their address was School Street. That was where the church was. It was a wooden building and we used that as the church and the language school.

MK: And what was the emphasis in the teaching?

AC: The Koreans have their own alphabets. We were there to learn how to read and write and speak and then also we had history classes. All I could remember is when we were having history, she would talk about Silla, (Koguryō and Paekche kingdoms). That's all I could remember. What it was all about, I don't remember. When I went to Korea (and visited) the national museum and (saw) artifacts from the Paekche kingdom and the Silla kingdom, it brought back memories). (When we went to Kyōngju) to visit the tombs, they (told us) what dynasty or period it was. So everything kind of comes back. I don't think I learned anything because, like I said, we were only playing. And the teacher [Mrs. Ki Moon Sur] who taught me is still living. She's in her eighties. (My friend) Salome (Han) and Mrs. (Ki Moon) Sur get in touch about once a week by telephone. (She is homebound so I told Salome), "One day, when I make the Korean *duk*," that Korean rice cake, "I would like to take some to her because she was my teacher." I don't know whether she remembers me but I'd like to see her.

So that's what my plan is and I said I'll try to do it before the Christmas holidays, but look how busy I am. (Chuckles)

MK: So did you learn Korean language when you went to that school?

AC: I---actually what it is is that speaking (telephone rings), I'm not very good at speaking, but mostly because of my. . . .

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape Nos. 22-52-4-93 and 22-53-4-93

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Agnes Eun Soon Rho Chun (AC)

March 1, 1993

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mrs. Agnes Eun Soon Rho Chun at her home in Honolulu, Hawai'i, on March 1, 1993. The interviewer is Michi Kodama-Nishimoto

I guess we can start today's interview with your experiences with the Korean-language school. I think we had talked about your going to a Korean-language school, and we talked about some of the emphasis. You know, when you look back on that experience, how much Korean language do you think you learned?

AC: Not real—not much, in my opinion. At least as far as the writing is concerned, I learned, but if you look at the writing that I do now, it's very, very basic, almost like kindergarten level. I'm really not sure of the characters also. But because I don't use it, and only in my contact with, say, a piece of paper with the Korean character on, I can at least read it and if it is a word or (phrase) that I kind of understand, then it's all right. Otherwise, if the words, the vocabulary is something new, contemporary, I wouldn't know. So, the conversations that we have with people coming from Korea now is very difficult because many, many of the vocabulary that they use is not what we had learned. Most of our contact in Korean language would be with our parents, and that was just household language.

MK: And then, you know, I know in terms of Japanese families, there are different dialects that were spoken. In the Korean families locally, were there different dialects of Korean spoken?

AC: I think not much. They have a little—they call that Kyōngsang-do, and they have the Pusan way of talking, but basically the words are all the same, I think, most of it. I mean one part of Korea might say a word, and it'll be pronounced a little different, down south, for instance, but not that much (difference). I think more so like Filipino and Chinese, I understand, they have such diverse dialects. Now, we do have in Korea this place called Cheju Island. Cheju Island (dialect) is entirely different from the other Koreans, but as we know, they do speak the regular Korean language. I had the experience when I went down in 1975. The first time I went to Cheju Island for a visit, the tourist guides gave us an example of what the Cheju Island people's language is. It's entirely different, it's like a different kind of language. But they spoke the regular Korean, and I don't know too much about the history of that language.

MK: And then, you know, when you were a youngster, and as a young adult, how much Korean did you actually use?

- AC: Very little, just conversation with our parents (and) our neighbor ladies, and then at school, whatever we were learning. But as I said before, we were always very inattentive at school. So I really didn't pick up too much in the way of speaking. So it was all picked up at home.
- MK: And then, you know, in the Japanese-language schools, they had something in their curriculum that they would call ethical teaching, or morals teaching through stories about what is good behavior. How about in the Korean-language schools? Was there anything like that?
- AC: I just vaguely remember (the teacher) telling us different kinds of stories, but the only stories that I could remember were the historical stories about kingdom of Paekche and Silla, and so forth. But I really can't remember.
- MK: And then, was there any sort of teachings that could be considered political or something about the nation of Korea, or Koreans as a group?
- AC: I really don't know. All I could remember (is) that she gave us the history of Korea, and whether it was political, I don't remember. Not even about the Japanese (was) brought up or anything like that in class.
- MK: And then, I know that in addition to the Korean-language school, your family was active in the Korean church. What was the name of that church?
- AC: It was the Korean Christian Church, and as far as I could remember, it was located on School Street at one time. Then they moved. That was where they had the church services and the Korean-language school. And it was in a lane, right off School Street, and that property is where the Korean Care Home (now) sits. And the Korean Care Home had the cottages built there, plus a main complex. The other old building that we used to use as a church and school was torn down.
- MK: And then, this Korean church, Korean Christian Church, was it a Methodist or Congregationalist, or . . .
- AC: We're considered Protestant Congregational. And our church is independent. In other words, it was found(ed) by Dr. Syngman Rhee. Originally they had church services in other places, like in Kaimukī and Pu'unui. Finally, they purchased that School Street property. The Korean Christian Church always was independent (until a few years ago) we joined the United Church of Christ, mainly because we needed to have our church identified with a main group for, I would say, training purposes, when you have training of Sunday school teachers and leaders of the church. (Although we are a member of the United Church of Christ) our church is still independent. In other words, the property still belongs to the church.
- MK: And then, as a youngster, I'm wondering what sorts of church activities were you involved in?
- AC: Oh, as a youngster growing up, I joined the junior choir. And we had what we called CE, or the Christian Endeavor Society. And we had Sunday school, and I also joined the Girl Scouts, which was sponsored by the church. And the Christian Endeavor meetings were held early evening on Sundays, about 5:30, 6:00, and it was a group of youths getting together with other churches also. They had Christian Endeavor Societies all over in the islands and we

would get together with them or we would have our own meetings. The junior choir sang in the church service whenever they had us scheduled.

MK: You know, I was wondering, did you look forward to those activities or was it something that your parents wanted you to get into?

AC: You know, it's a funny thing but it's—when you compare it to today's youth, it was something for us to do, because there was really nothing we could do. The only thing that you could do was go to a movie, right? We kind of looked forward to going to church. It wasn't something that was forced on me. I kind of felt that it was in fact required. So even the Christian Endeavor, we had at least fifteen to twenty kids, at one time. The junior choir was a good number too. So we more or less were members of the choir and the Christian Endeavor. (As) for the Girl Scouts, we had a good number also, maybe about fifteen girls, that was also something that we kind of looked forward to, during the weekends.

MK: Yeah, and I'm going to sort of change the subject. That was like a way to kind of finish up the interview that we had last time. I know that your father was ill since about 1933, and he passed away in 1935 after your mom tried all sorts of remedies and everything. Now, when your father passed away, how did your family manage financially and otherwise? Just to, you know, stay together, survive.

AC: My mother was working, and I believe she was, at that time, working for a tailor shop. And I don't recall whether she had gone to the tailor shops to work, but I know she had, you know, these pieces of trousers and shirts that were brought over, where she can sew at home. And she also worked at the pineapple cannery [Hawaiian Pineapple Co.]. And then, at a point, I think what happened was that she had to pull out my oldest brother. The eldest had to quit school. He was a junior, and I know many, many years even after that, she always said, "I wish I didn't pull him out of school." And she said, "In retrospect, I sometimes wonder why I didn't get welfare." Because, at this point, when she was telling me this, the other ladies who were in the same situation—because many of them, their husbands were much older than they were, and they passed away. Some of them had divorced and so forth. But many of them were on welfare and evidently, they were able to send their kids to school continual(ly) and they had enough money to invest in buying homes, you know—apartments and rooming homes, houses, or whatever you call them. So she often wondered. I know that what she did several times was to hold that *tanomoshi*. The *kye*, they call that in Korean. That's how you get money to work with. So she'd be the *tanomoshi* boss. You would collect and use the money at that time. She would then have to pay each month whatever number of months there were. But anyway, she also did that. I think she had made loans with other women, too. I remember one lady who loaned her money. My mother was very good friends with her and she always was very thankful that she was able to get loans from the lady. Then my brother, second brother graduated from high school and he went to work. And then my sister, the third in the family, she had to quit school too. She quit school when she was in the eighth grade. To help with the family and she worked in a tailor shop. So again, she was the one that my mother felt bad about. But all in all—I mean, all the children grew up. And then my sister, Violet, which is number four in the family, she was able to finish high school and then she even had two years of college. Just before the war broke out, I think she quit school. I mean, she was able to only go (for) two years, and then the war broke out. She never did return. So that was how we got along. Everybody pitched in and worked. So really, my brother was the breadwinner of the family.

MK: And, you know, you mentioned that like your mom took in sewing from a tailor shop. Would you remember what kind of tailor shop that was?

AC: The tailor shops at that time were all located on the bases, like Fort Shafter. In fact, all I could remember, they had Fort Shafter and they had Wheeler Field—and that was in Wahiawā. And they had also on Luke Field, that's the Ford Island. Luke Field on Ford Island, they had a tailor shop there. In fact, my brother, the second brother, he finished high school and he went into a tailoring. He worked as a tailor on Luke Field. He eventually used that as his trade. Before the war broke out, he worked at Pearl Harbor, when they started hiring. And he worked for the sail loft in making anything (involving) sewing. They would fix upholstery and the sail, whatever is required on the boats. So he got that as a trade. My big brother, the eldest, worked as a painter at the Pearl Harbor shipyard, so that was his trade all his life. My sister Violet, when the war broke out, worked at Ford Island, and two months after the war broke out, that's where I started also.

MK: Okay, let me see. And, you know, just going back to the period right before the war started, from, say, 1935 to '41, with your brothers, your sister helping out financially, how did you think your family was managing? Did you feel like you folks were having a hard time or did it seem okay?

AC: You know, it's a funny thing, but I never, as a growing child, had been deprived of, like, food, for instance. My mother always made *mandoo*, and she had *kalbi*. And one thing that I remember we always ate was this boiled ham. You know the ham that comes in that pack now, hanging on the refrigerated section, the ham slices. We would always have that. I had all my eggs and whatever. So when we talk about kids growing up in the plantations and they didn't have too much to eat and so forth, I don't know what it means to have to go through that, because as far as eating was concerned, we always—in fact, almost when I was growing up, that was a sort of ritual every day we would walk down Pua Lane going to the markets along King Street. I would go with my mother and we'd go to the market and (buy) pork (for) thirty or thirty-five cents a pound. My mother always bought tenderloin. She would call that, "tenderline." So I don't think we ever had any problem (with) food. At that time, we didn't have Korean restaurants, so making *mandoo* was a big deal and you really eat that only during the New Year's holiday. My mother would sometimes cook that (on weekdays and) we'd have *mandoo* (after work). I know she must have struggled, but I didn't see it that way.

I had clothes. I don't remember wearing hand-me-downs. (There was a) five years difference between me and my sister above me so there was nothing that could (be handed) down. So I just can't remember that I had a difficult time.

MK: And then in terms of school activities, were you ever denied an opportunity to participate in something because of lack of money, or lack of time, or . . .

AC: No, I never did. I only remember that I was always in the health class because I was underweight. I was tall. I was always one of the tallest girls in the classroom, and in fact, taller than the boys, and so I was underweight. So I was always in that underweight class, and we would have to (drink) milk and (eat) cracker. So I never really had any experience of not having money for lunch or any kind of activity.

And I remember like when Christmastime comes around and we had the New Year's (holidays). At the Dole Pineapple Cannery [also known as Hawaiian Pineapple Co.] (grounds

on Dillingham Blvd.), they would have big carnival. They'd have a big carnival and that was a big thing (for us). I always went there, and I remember that was where we had (our) first experience of carnival. So I really can't say that I was deprived. For instance, at Sunday school, I remember we had our Sunday school programs at (near) where the city hall now is, in that vicinity. We would rent that (place), the church would, and have our Christmas programs, and it was a big deal. We would have each of our classes perform. I remember, many, many years, we would have to wear all white dresses (and) black shoes. I remember those Mary Janes. I had them and I didn't have any problem of ever not having anything. So I don't know how my mother managed, but she did.

MK: And then I know that during the summers, you mentioned that you did work, though, to help supplement.

AC: That's right. So when I was thirteen, fourteen—no, fourteen—fourteen, fifteen and sixteen, I worked at the cannery. And I had two girlfriends whose sisters were going to summer school, and they had previously worked. So they told me that they were going to work for the cannery at Hawaiian Pine. So I found that this lady, Sara Lee, was (not) working and was going to have a baby. So I got her card. Then three of us went to the cannery and worked. The first year I went, I went in as a trimmer. And I trimmed pineapple. And oh what an experience. I still remember that. Shall I talk about it?

MK: Oh yeah.

AC: (I) went as (a) trimmer. Those two girls went as packers. Because Sara had become a trimmer, so I had to go as a trimmer. So I was alone, and I remember most of the trimmers, you know, were old-timers and they were sort of big women. The pineapple would come down (on the belt) and everybody was supposed to pick one. They'd have a girl at the beginning of the pine[apple] line (to control the flow of pines). (For example, for nine trimmers.) She'd hold the pines, and when she has five of them, then she'd let it go. (The first five trimmers are to pick one. Then she'd hold four for the four trimmers and this five and four is repeated. Each trimmer knows which group of pine is hers and must pick one each time.) So in the meantime, as a beginner, you're trying to learn how to hold the pineapple and having a hard time (with) the juice (running) down your gloves, and you can hardly wield the knife the right way, they would let you get away with it. The ladies would do extra work and cut the pine (for you). But later on, when you didn't pick up your pine and they knew that you were doing all right, they'd just slam it in front of you. (They do this) when the other pine (is) coming down (and just in front of you, they'd send the stray slamming it). You learn real quick that you better wake up. I was very fortunate, I didn't have to go to the big huge pines, but people would literally get aches in their thumb picking up the pines and holding it. But I was fortunate, I had small pines.

One experience I had was that while I was trimming I heard this voice, somebody calling, "Sara, Sara!" And this woman or whoever Sara was would (not) answer (and) finally the calling stop(ped) and then pretty soon (I felt) this hand on my shoulder. (The) forelady said, "Sara, I've been calling you," and (then) it dawned on me, I was Sara.

So I turned around and (quickly) told her, "Oh, I'm so sorry." I said, "You know, I didn't hear you." Ever since then, I kind of tuned myself to the name Sara. I got away with that for the first year.

The following year, I requested a change to go to packing. I got in as a packer. I traveled with those (two) girls (and) learned how to pack. So three of us would go from one table to another. And we would have a lot of fun. And that was when I was fifteen. During the second year, they (had a) table of gems (or) cubes. Instead of packing, (two girls would) grab the pine and put it in (a) little chute (on either side of a) boy in the center. And we would really like that because you're right next to a guy.

(Laughter)

AC: We'd try to get (to that table but) periodically, they would take us away because they want(ed) us to pack. Because (the gem table needed no thinking, it was very popular). (In) the third year, I remember, (the) head forelady (Mabel) came by.

MK: Oh, Mabel Kozuki?

AC: (And) tapped me on the shoulder and said she wanted to see me. (I said to myself,) "Oh no," don't tell me I'm going to get caught for being Sara."

So I followed her into the office and then she told me, she said she wanted me to do something for her, something special. And I said, "Well, what is it?"

She said, "I want you to take this pan," and it looked like a baking pan. She says, "Stand at the end of the packing table, and when the round pines [come down to the end] that packable, pick it all up and put it in the pan. And then, put the table number and then bring it to the office." (I made two round each night.) Later on, the foreladies found out what I was doing. And so, as soon as they spotted me, they would say, "The round pine girl is here. Hold your pines." And then you see nothing coming down. Hardly anything coming down, all packed. Many times what they'd do is they'd just squash it. They're lazy to even determine what size, what grade it is. They had the fancy, the standard, and the B grade. And then so what they do is they kind of squish it. So if I see any of those that were folded over, I just pick it up and just put it in the pan. As the results came to the foreladies, that's when they found out what their tables were doing. So that ended after two weeks.

(Laughter)

AC: And then, after—it was towards the end of the season anyway, and I never went back.

MK: Do you remember how much you were getting paid back then?

AC: Oh must be, what, twenty-five cents? I don't even remember. All I remember is they gave us a *bangō*. And then, you never signed anything, and you had a little brown envelope. Small little envelope and your pay was in there, in cash. And then so we'd just show our *bangō*, and we'd get our pay.

MK: And then, when you got your pay, what did you do with it, the money?

AC: I really don't know what I did with it, I just don't have any recollection. I don't even remember giving it to my mother. But I remember how we were going to work, though. I always worked on the second shift, and we were in Pua Lane, so we had a whole group of kids that worked over there also. So we'd join the second shift and we'd go to work around

one o'clock, maybe two o'clock, and then we'd come home in the evening. And we'd all walk home, and we never had any problem, transportation-wise.

But I remember there was a radio program—funny, some of the things that you can remember? There was a radio program that was called "Hilltop House." And I remember listening to that every day, about eleven o'clock, before I went to work, (sometime) around eleven. And that was one of the things that was so very interesting. Here, I don't even remember now what the plot was about, but all I could remember was the name, "Hilltop House," and we'd listen to that and then we'd go to work. We'd all meet and then walk to, go through Robello Lane, and then go to work.

MK: You know like you mentioned that, you know, as young girls, you liked to work at the gem table because there were boys there.

AC: Yeah. (Chuckles)

MK: How much of it was social, going to the cannery, I mean? I know you worked hard, you know, but. . . .

AC: It's funny, but I never did have any kind of date or anything. We never did, all of us. We just worked and we knew them and that's about it. Because they were much older than we were, right? We were like fourteen, fifteen and sixteen, and they were much older kids than we were. And they had tray boys also. You know, they pull out the trays, but it wasn't that much fun because tray boys would be walking back and forth. But then, we'd be talking stories with this guy (at the gem table). (Chuckles) So it's real funny.

MK: That's a nice memory to have, you know. You can remember how you felt back then.

AC: I remember, and I remember that cannery, I tell you, was really a—what you call? What's the word for it? They had us so programmed. They would have neon light(s), a green and a red neon light. When the green went on, we can go to the bathroom. And the bathrooms were all located right above the walkway so you go to the nearest one to your table. When the red goes on, you have to come down. And that's how it was, and that's how they controlled your break time, to use the bathroom. (But) they had good music at the time, playing throughout the day, which was very interesting. That's how I kind of remember so many of the old songs.

MK: And how about the foreladies? How did they treat you?

AC: Oh, we had no problem with the foreladies. They were very nice and they had the relievers also. The relievers were white caps with brown strip on the top. They were really very nice. I guess if you pay attention and do your job, you really don't have any static, like anything else. But they would get after some kids who would (slack) off. They'd break pine, let the pine run down. And that's where after I got to be a good packer, all three of us, they'd usually try to separate us to different tables. We begin at the same table, and they'd come and take us away, one by one. What they'd do is they'd put us at the end. And then, when you constantly get pineapple coming down and you're backed up, as the last person, you have to roll your pineapple in the front of you on that little tray, until you get time to pack it. So when it starts to really get going, the second and the last person, what we'd do is, we'd kind of wait as the pine comes down and we'd see who the person is missing it constantly. Then

when we see the pine coming down right in front of her, we'd get this extra pine that we held back, and we'd just shoot it up, and then it'll just splash in front of them. Like the trimmers used to do. But now, I had the opportunity to do it, right?

(Laughter)

AC: But you know, we were really rascals. But it was really an experience for three years. And then, 1941, June, July, August, that was the last year that I worked. And then '41, December, the war broke out. And then I never went back.

MK: Yeah, okay. And now when '41 came along, you were still going to school, right, at McKinley. And then, Pearl Harbor Day comes, December 7 comes. Now, what happened on December 7?

AC: Well, after working at the pineapple (cannery) in August, I quit in August. In September was my junior year. I had September, October, November, and then the war broke out on December 7. Okay, shortly before the war broke out, I decided I'm going to take a job. So I went to Kress [S.H. Kress and Company] for Christmas vacation job, Christmas job. Now I'm sixteen years old and that's when you're allowed to work. So Christmas, I was already sixteen in June. At that time, I was working as Sara, so here comes December. So I applied for a job, sometime I guess in November. And then I was supposed to start on December 6. So I went to Kress, worked all day at the counter. In those days, Kress was—all department stores usually had a counter, display counters. And then the girl stood in the center, or two girls. If you wanted anything on the counter, you would pick it up and then she'd come over, and then you'd pay her, and then there's a cash register right there. So every counter had one or two persons. So that day, I worked with someone at the counter and we sold, I think at that time sanitary belts, ribbons and things like that. So, I remember having to bend over and look under the counter all day to refill. So (at the end of the day) I remember getting paid, in a small little envelope again, cash. I remember it was like a dollar, ninety-somewhat cents [a little more than \$1.90]. So I went home and that was the first day of work, legitimate under my name. So I was really proud for a dollar, ninety-somewhat [cents], eight hours a day.

And then, next morning was December 7. All I remember was I was in bed when we heard planes flying over and then the radio was on. I heard (some) commotion outside, and I got up. When I went out, they said, "Oh, the war. There's a war." There's planes flying around and when I looked up, we saw (a) plane flying, and it was with the round red circle.

So we ran inside and as we were listening to the radio, about 9:00, 9:30 [A.M.], we heard this thud-like (sound). We all rushed out, and there was a little store in the front, and there was a lane next to it, and then our cottages, six of them were in that vicinity. Right next to the lane, there was this duplex. And lo and behold, right under the veranda, there was a huge hole. We all ran and were looking at the hole. While we were standing over there, some kind of uniformed people (came) running. They told us to evacuate. So the whole neighborhood had to evacuate, and luckily, at that time, my brother had married and gone out of the house. This is the older one. So he had been married maybe two years. His mother-in-law had just bought a home. That's where (the) Continental Apartments on Lunalilo Street (stands). (There was) a huge home (but) it was not occupied yet, so we all went there and—oh, in fact, they were about ready to move in, so they decided to just spend the night there. So we all spent the night there. From there, we looked towards Pearl Harbor (and saw) the smoke coming up. We could still see the smoke coming up, and that's about as far as—I mean near, as near as I

could see anything. And we never, I never knew anything about the McCully area being bombed and so forth, until afterwards. We went home the next day.

MK: You know, on that December 7, when you have the planes going overhead, you've heard that war is on, you see the hole in the ground, you've been told to evacuate, what did you feel?

AC: We were all scared, and especially at night when they told us all the lights had to be out. At this great big home, we were literally in the dark, because we couldn't do anything to the windowpanes or anything. So it was really an experience. And I remember, we had to sleep on the floor, and next morning, oh, I was so sore because all day I had gotten that job the day before, and I was probably using muscles that I never used. So I was really hurting and for the next few days, we were hurting. Eventually, they made announcements to let us know that—that was maybe a few weeks later, that they wanted us to help with the identification process. And so, since I was in a typing class and shorthand, I went to help. They called us and told us to come and help. So we all went, and . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: You were saying that all of you went to Central Intermediate?

AC: Those of us assigned to Central Intermediate went there every morning and helped with the identification process. Each one of us had to have a state ID, and we were fingerprinted, so this was the process we had to go through. [On December 27, an order was issued to fingerprint and register all civilians. Teachers, qualified students and others spent long hours at this task.] And that was the first time I found out who entertainers were. (Chuckles) We had kids—I mean, you know, we were all young kids at that time. So when people came, you have to ask them what they were doing, their occupation. Many of them were entertainers, and so I just kind of naively said, "Oh, what kind of entertainer?" And then, I was kind of hushed. And then, later on we found out that they were prostitutes, right?

(Laughter)

AC: That's how I got my first experience about prostitutes. And they all probably were in (the) River Street area, right? And so, they came to Central Intermediate.

MK: So you would ask them for their names, their addresses?

AC: Addresses and whatever.

MK: Occupation and fingerprint them?

AC: (Yes.)

MK: And then, would you then give them a card with that information . . .

AC: I don't remember. Yeah, I think we had to give it to them at that time, if I'm not mistaken.

I'm not sure now what had happened. But everybody was given a card.

MK: And were you required to always carry that around with you?

AC: Oh yes. I think I still have one of my mother's, ID [identification].

MK: And when would you have to show it, the ID?

AC: Any time. Any time they stopped you at night, if you were out. And this was just about any place, anything you did, you had to show your ID. That was to indicate that you were registered.

MK: And you know, you mentioned that you folks were called down to help. Was it a whole class of students or how did they get the help?

AC: I think what they did, they announced that they wanted students of the schools to come and help. And then especially those that were in the typing classes. The business groups [classes] were asked to come over to help. And so that's how we got there.

MK: And then, you know, another question I have is, you know, with the Japanese attacking Pearl Harbor, and your mother being Korean and having lived through a time when the Japanese occupied Korea, how did she react to all this?

AC: (Laughs) It's so funny, because we had this neighbor next door, and of the six cottages in this little compound, they were the only Japanese. So my mother would say, "Look out there, they must have known this was coming on. Because they're not out there watching." She says, "They all know that this was probably planned. They're not even out there watching."

(Laughter)

MK: Oh.

AC: And then, later on, you know, they had pictures in the paper about an ad that came out. I think it was the Musashiya [actually, Hawai'i Importing Company], that fabric store. There was some kind of ad that came out and they [military intelligence] questioned [it]; they said there was something in there that said what day it [the attack] was going to be and so forth. So when I told that to my mother, she said, "See, I told you so."

(Laughter)

AC: But I don't think it was ever proved, but that's what she would tell me. That's what the reaction was.

MK: Did she express any fears though?

AC: Well, I think we all were afraid. But you see, we didn't know how—I didn't, anyway, until many years later. I never did probably follow through because I was busy doing my own thing, and at that time, I don't think I subscribed to the newspaper. I was living alone with—oh, at that time, my brothers and sisters, right, were with us. And then, shortly thereafter, my brother, the second one—the first one was married, and my sister was also

married. So my brother, who was the second brother, married in January of '42, right after the war. And then my sister above me, she married in July of '42. So they were out, so I never got the paper. So I never really---and then too, during the time that I was helping with them and you know we had this blackout. We would have to have our windows all blacked out and they were selling this kind of tar paper. We didn't own a car at that time, so we didn't have any problem, but just coming home in blackout, it was really (something). And my brothers were at work. They were called at different, all hours of the day. So I hardly ever saw them. And then, my second brother moved out, and so I hardly ever saw them. So my sister and myself and my mother. When my sister moved out, just my mother and myself. And in '42, actually, when I started to work, my brother-in-law was working at Pearl Harbor, on Ford Island. And he had my sister work there too. He got a job for her and then in February, they asked me if I wanted to join them. So I went in as a messenger. So between, just going to work and coming back and it's blackout, there's nothing you can do. We were just eating and sleeping already. So that's all I could recollect at that time. Then you would have these wardens, the neighborhood wardens come around and check you out. I don't even remember going to church. During that time, work was more important. And I think church was holding services, but when they started holding services, I don't even remember.

So my time, actually, was just between home and work. And from February, that's in '42, I worked as a messenger. Then in June of '42, I became a GS-1 [general services-1], or at that time, they were called a CAF, clerical administrative and fiscal, CAF-1. In fact, when I started off as a messenger, what they did was this was something new at that workplace. The air station decided that they needed a gofer for each department. So each department---first, when I went in, they didn't start it at the department level. This was only in the admin[istration] office. The admin had to do with all of the incoming mail and outgoing mail, so they needed mail clerks. So we were hired to work in the admin. I was one of, I think, maybe about two or three that first came into the admin office as messengers. We were responsible for picking up the mail, and sending out the mail. At this time, the admin office took care of mail that came in for the whole department, the supply department. I worked for the supply department. The supply department did the procurement for all of the other departments in the station. So they would have aircraft parts that came in bundles, shipped through the postal service. So we would have to have a big [handcart], like (a) pushcart, the flatbed. The flatbed thing with that handle. And we'd push it to the post office, and then we'd pile all of these packages and whatever you have. Sometimes, two of us would have to go.

I remember one time it was so heavy, we were trying to push it over this hump on the road, and we couldn't do it, this girl and myself. There was this fire department and those guys were just sitting around, watching people pass by. So they were watching us for a while. Then they decided to help us, so they (came running) across and they'd help us push it across the hump. We'd take it to the elevator, and make the distribution. And then, I stayed there just about, what, until June. Then they promoted me to a CAF-1, and I became a clerk for the time section, payroll section. So I became a timekeeper. I left that admin office and became a timekeeper. And then I became a two [CAF-2], I think, a year later.

MK: You know, when you first started as a messenger, how did you get that job?

AC: Oh, my brother-in-law was working for that accounting department there. They were hiring kids. So when he heard about messenger positions open, he asked me if I wanted to take the job. And then, when I was being processed in January, sometime at the later part of January, I told him I wanted to work, so they started to send me the paper. While I was being

processed, the announcement came that school was going to be opened on February 2, [1942], the first day of school after the war. So I didn't know what to do, whether to go back as a student in (my) junior (year) and pick it up from there. But since I had the job and it was going to pay me ninety dollars a month, it's ten-eighty, \$1,080 per annum. I still remember that. So, I decided I might as well go to work. I told my mother I was going to work and she said okay. We had no income, really. And so my sister, my brother had gone out, and so it's my sister now. And so my mother says, well, up to me. So I says, "I'm going to go." So I went to work.

I earned ninety dollars a month. Later on, my mother had a job with the air force, at Hickam Field. They were recruiting people. This was—I don't know when it was, but maybe after 1942, when the air force and all of the services were recruiting (more) people from the Mainland. They were being housed at the cantonment, the navy cantonment at Pearl Harbor area. Hickam Field had their own cantonment too. So they were hiring these ladies to do cleaning. So my mother, her contemporaries were going to work, they said, "Why don't—" they asked her if she wanted to work. So she decided to go to work. A whole bunch of Korean ladies went to work. They had their social security [number] and they started working as cleaning ladies. I remember, my mother had worked with this lady, Helen Choy's mother. They were cleaning with this disinfectant, I think. And they got toxic (poisoning of their) hands. That toxic thing got into their hands and their hands got swollen, and oh, was so huge and big. St. Louis School was (the military) hospital. [Originally known as Provisional Hospital No. 2, but after June, 1942, it was called the 147th General Hospital.] So they put my mother and this lady in the hospital over there, and they were taken care of, and they got well after that, after all the toxins were removed.

MK: Did that take a while?

AC: I don't know how many days she was in there, but they were placed in there and then after she was well, she went back to work. But they were told to be careful about the usage of that.

MK: And like how did---you know, in your case, where your brother-in-law told you about the job, was there any testing involved or. . . .

AC: At that time, they just had us fill up an application and we were hired.

MK: Was there a sense that it was a lot of competition for these jobs, or was it something where you could easily get a job?

AC: Well, that was just the very beginning part, and people were getting aware now of these jobs, so right away, they had this employment office opened at the main gate. Outside the main gate, right next to the main gate, they had this Pearl Harbor employment office, and that's where all the people were, getting jobs. It was advertised that they need(ed) people. But since I had already had the inside information, I was able to start on the second of February.

MK: And you know, you mentioned that there were two or three of you hired. Were they also friends of yours, or were they people that you didn't know?

AC: No, I didn't know who they were. They just came in and then later on, they went to the employment office and put in for it. Many school kids came by too, like myself. In fact, they announced it at schools too, they have different positions open and asked the kids to join. So

many of them did. There were about six of us on Ford Island, that—not in my department, other departments. There were about six of us, I think, that continued to work instead of going back to school. So I stayed out all of my junior year. June came along, I was still out. My senior year, I still worked, full-time, and we earned annual leave and sick leave.

So the following year after my senior year, around October, they announced that kids who had gone back to school—I mean, gone to work, if they want to come back to school may do so on a half-a-day basis and the department of defense worked with them to have us come back to work part-time. So the deal was, you go to school from eight o'clock in the morning to about 11:00, or 11:30. And we had four courses. And after the fourth course, you go to work. Because we worked on Ford Island, we had to catch the ferry or the launch. Well, at that time, we had the Army-Navy Y [Army-Navy Young Men's Christian Association at the corner of Hotel and Richards streets]. And across the Army-Navy Y, they had (a) bowling alley, and they had the Black Cat Cafe. And they had the Pearl Harbor Drivers' Association, with buses that went into Pearl Harbor. Previously, they didn't have any buses going into Pearl Harbor, they just went outside to the main gate, and that's it. The Pearl Harbor Drivers' Association had a bus that went all the way into the landing (area), way inside of Pearl Harbor, by the dry dock area. Then from there, they had a launch that connected to Pearl Harbor, Ford Island. So what we did was we'd run for the bus, as soon as class was over, run for the bus, catch the bus—and at that time, it was those trolley buses. We'd catch the bus and get off at the Black Cat Cafe. And then, get a hamburger and milk shake, or whatever, and run across the street for the Pearl Harbor bus. And then, we'd catch that bus and go to work, and we'd get there just in time to catch the launch. So that's why we had to rush because if we miss(ed) that bus, we'd be late. And then, we'd get to work around 1:00, 1:30 [P.M.]. Then, we'd work until—see, they had two shifts on Ford Island. So we'd work until five, six o'clock, when the day was long, and to seven o'clock sometimes. Then, when the (days got) short(er), just until five.

MK: And then, you'd again . . .

AC: Then catch the ferry or the launch back home. At that time, we didn't have that highway like we do to Pearl Harbor now. You had mud—oh, that place where they used to park the cars, buses over there, used to be a mud hole.

MK: Were you ever coming home so late that you'd have a problem with, you know, the blackouts and all that?

AC: Well, not really. We had to be out of the streets, early enough. So in the beginning part, we'd try to get in before it was dark. And then, we'd have to study anyway. We had to do our homework and then go to school next morning. Was really hard thing. I had English and social studies, that's the core studies. I had a Mrs. Claire Smith in that senior [year]—oh, they made us, they gave us time for working in our junior year. So when I went back, it was only the senior year that we finished half a day. So really I didn't have much of an education, when you come down to it. We went back to core studies, and then I had typing and shorthand for the two periods. Then after I—then we had graduation in June of '44, which was not really my class, but I attended the graduation ceremony. And then that was in '44 I graduated. So the annual leave that I had accumulated was able to carry me from October of 1943 until, I think it was around April of 1944. Then, I graduated in June. So I had full pay, until I had leave without pay. In other words, starting from around the ending part of April, I went to work, say, four hours, I get paid four hours, and then four hours leave without pay.

But I was credited with my full year, because I had enough work time—in other words, unless you had x-number of working hours, you would be considered leave without pay, and then you wouldn't be counting the full years. But I did have enough time.

So during the working years, I really was not very active in anything, because there was really—we worked overtime, after I graduated. I worked overtime, and I worked on Ford Island until I was—in 1947, September, I transferred from Ford Island. We had this fellow working—you see, when you work on Ford Island, you get to be very close with many people because you ride the ferry, and you have to get there early. Rid(ing) the ferry, takes about twenty minutes. So really, almost half an hour, you're waiting for the ferry, you're talking to your friends, you're with them on the ferry, then you get off. In the afternoon, the same thing again. So we had (Mr. Jong Chock) who had a sister working on the Pearl Harbor, on this side. He told me, "Oh, you know, my sister (Ethel) is looking for someone that can run this payroll check writing department, as a supervisor." The position is a CAF-4, at that time. And then so, he said, "Why don't you go over and take that job? You don't have to come on this ferry," and so forth.

So I told him, I said, "Oh, I'll think about it." And, you know, the weeks went by, and this lady was going to move to the Mainland because her husband was leaving. (He was in the) military.

So finally one day, he told me, he said, "You know, Ethel called me, wanted me to know what your decision is."

That day, just happened that when we were working on Ford Island, (Rose Au) who had a car (was kind enough to take five of us to the beach). (In fact all six of us), every payday, would either go to a movie, after dinner, or if it was not that situation, what we'd do is we'd go to lunch (on weekends) to different places like hotels, like Young Hotel. They had that nice dining room. And we'd go to (the) Royal Hawaiian, (the) Queen's Surf, and Lau Yee Chai. And then later on they had (the P. Y. Chong restaurant). We'd go to these different places for lunch on Saturday and make it a day. We had a lot of fun doing those things, but that day we decided we'd go swimming.

He said, "Well, why don't you go before you folks go swimming. I'll set up an appointment for you to get an interview."

So I said, "Okay."

So we went there, I had an interview. I walked in, I walked out. We went swimming. And that fellow told me, he said, "Oh, when can you start?"

And I said, "Well, I think probably, no less than two weeks, because that's the normal procedure."

So he said, "Okay."

So I'm hired already, you know. So I went back to work the next day—and then this was Wednesday (that) we went—Thursday, I told my boss. So he told me, "Okay. Go see the chief clerk."

I went to see the chief clerk and he was (Clifford) Kong. And you know, he---I'm much younger than they were, and so they treat(ed) me like a kid. And he's a very rough guy, but he's real smart. He became the chief clerk and he told me, "Well, okay, two weeks, you know."

So I went back to my desk. And then, I was thinking along the lines, I said, "Gee," I've been teaching this girl who was working under me all the ropes and she knows everything, and so I really can leave without having too much left behind. So I told my boss [Luke Lai], I said, "You think I can leave tomorrow?"

He said, "Why?"

I said, "Well, you know, Leilani (Mattoon) can do everything." And I (said), "Maybe I can just go and you won't miss me."

And he knew that I was doing, extra work for him, and so forth. So I said, "Then I can just start on my new job."

So he said, "Okay, go see Cliff [Kong]."

So I went back to see Cliff, and he listened to my story, and then he told me, he said, "Are you sure that's what you want to do?"

And I said, "(Yes.)"

And so he said, "What did Luke say?"

And I said---his name was Luke Lai, my boss---I said, "(Yes), he said okay." So I said, "You know, I've taught Leilani everything so there's nothing to worry about."

So he said, "Okay, get the hell out of here!"

(Laughter)

AC: And I said, "Oh thank you."

The next day, I left and it was so sad. I mean, I just left so quickly, right? I cried and I cried. I almost missed the ferry going home. That was my first employment, really, that was meaningful. So that was from '42 to September of '47. And shortly thereafter, after I left there, you know, '47, '48, they got word that they're going to close in '49. So the whole station closed up. So I went on to that new job, and then I stayed there doing the supervising (of) the check writing. Then, shortly thereafter, the check writing was taken over by the Naval Supply Center, so at that time, the bureau now gives our office---this was the Fourteenth Naval District Disbursing Office I had transferred to. They decided that they were going to give us new duties in accounting. We had not had any accounting. The name of the office is going to be changed from Fourteenth Naval District Disbursing Office to the Navy Central Disbursing Office. And it's going to take in a new type of work. It just happened that the payroll went and they put me in charge of that accounting department.

Subsequently, this is now in '51, I get a baby. My first son, Marcus, came along. So I was

on maternity leave when they moved from the Pearl Harbor main complex area, into the Supply Center. So our disbursing office became a tenant of the Supply Center at Pearl Harbor. I was (now) in the accounting department. In fact, before we moved from the Pearl Harbor, and before I got pregnant, I had this IBM [International Business Machines Corporation] experience, not knowing what IBM machines were and etc. Our department was in charge of doing the mechanical work of accounting, and so they had the shipyard department—and I guess you would call that the IBM room—take over. So they plugged all the boards for us and they had this big electrical accounting machines, predecessor of (the) computers. And then, so what this assistant of mine and myself would do is we'd go to the shipyard office with all of the keypunching that was done in our office, and we'd go up there and he'll tell us how to put the cards in. That's how I learned. How to put the cards in, the IBM cards, and run the machine. It was so funny, we had no formal training. So he would tell us, "If you have any problem, just raise your hand," and he'd come along. This was a man by the name of Arthur Hill. I still remember him.

So he'd come by and he would look at the machine and fix whatever is wrong and then press the button and here we'd go again. But it was so funny, when I first talked to him on the phone. I had called him to let him know that I was told to contact him and make an appointment to see him. My name was Rho at that time. I was not married at that time, I called him and he spoke with me, and then I went to visit him. And he looked at me and I said, "Mr. Hill?"

He said, "Yes."

Then I said, "Oh, I'm Agnes Rho."

He looked at me, and then he said, "You're the person?"

I said, "Yes." And I said, "What's the matter?"

He said, "I was expecting a *Haole*."

(Laughter)

AC: I said, "Why?" I said, "I don't talk like a *Haole*."

He says, "Yes, you do." He says, "I listened to you on the phone, and I was so sure I was going to see a *Haole* come up."

(Laughter)

AC: That's how I first got involved in this computer thing. But really, IBM was so different, from what they have now. Oh my goodness. And we would have to do a certain process and you'd have to pull this plug out and wire and put it into a different slot, and that would be so—I just didn't know what I was doing. So it was really an experience. When we moved over to the other Pearl Harbor Supply Center Complex, I stayed there until I left there for Ford Island again. I stayed there, that disbursing office, from 1947, September, until, let's see, it was in July of 1967.

MK: And then what happened from July 1967.

AC: I was in accounting, and then I stayed there until 1953. Then from 1953, they put me down into the military pay. Some of the accounting department jobs were going to San Diego. Now, they were shifting the direction. So I was put down into the military pay, and the commander wanted me to go down there for one reason, that the military pay (division) had about twenty-five military personnel, and about ten civilians (with) a (military) chief doing the operational supervision. (His tour is only) two years. Then the payroll master's (tour was also) two years. The disbursing officer had two years, and the cashier was a (warrant) officer. He was also military. So they wanted somebody there that could keep continuity. So he decided to put me there, but I told him, "I don't even know what a payroll looks like." I mean, the pay record.

But he said, "No, I know you can do it."

So I was put there. And I worked there in one corner with a manual. (The military), they were very much against it, someone outside coming in to supervise. But eventually, I looked around the operation and I noticed that there were some things that could really be standardized, like writing letters. All of the clerks were sending letters for individuals to the bureau for some kind of entitlement, and they each had to compose the letter, get the address, (etc.). So I started to standardize letters in form, form letters. And eventually I had shelves of form letters for different kind of entitlements. Then, later on, I also made a transmittal letter with different boxes to check off. In the beginning, I had a lot of flack from the (workers). They didn't want to use it, but eventually, I found out that they accepted it when the supply was running down, and they'd tell me, "Oh, we don't have this form," or, "This is the last form that I'm taking." I knew (then) that they had accepted the situation.

Then I also did some changes in the way they entered the items in the payroll, pay record. Instead of having each one typewritten, I had rubber stamps made so that everybody had a set of rubber stamps and all they do is pick up the rubber stamp and just rubber stamp it in, put the date, (etc.). So it became sort of a uniform system. And later on, when we had transition, every six months we had to open up a new pay record. And that was a real hassle with lot(s) of overtime. So I devised little charts, showing the progress of the transition. Because while you're closing out, extending the line entries and closing out the pay record and balancing it, you still had to keep the new one going because you had to get it ready for the payroll that's coming up for the first of the month. It began January to June and July 1 to December. So these people have to be paid, and we have to service them over the counter at the same time.

So I had the transition going smoothly, and so I eventually found out many years later, seven years after I had left that office, (the) boss that hired me, he was the executive director. He called me one day and he told me, "You remember that transition schedule that you used to (chart the) progress (of the closing of the pay records)? Do you have it?"

And I said, "Gee, I don't think so, but I'll look around."

So I looked through my papers and I couldn't find it, and I (asked him), "What's the matter?" He said after I had left they had a heck of a time, keeping the overtime and the transition going. And he said, he decided to call me, seven years later.

MK: Oh, gee.

AC: But anyway so after I stayed in that (payroll) office, there was an announcement, the fellow

that took my job in the accounting department was going to Hong Kong. He took a job (in) Hong Kong, for two years, and he would come back to that job. So they called that the obligated position. So it was announced and I decided to put in for it, because in the meantime, while I was down there, the job had just gotten up until a ten [GS-10]. It became a ten. So I put in for the job, and I got it. So I went back to the old job.

So not even a year, ten months later, there was an announcement at Ford Island again. Now Ford Island is opening up.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

MK: Okay. We can just continue where we left off, yeah. Here we go.

AC: Okay, so anyway, while I was at the accounting office, the job for a budget and accounting officer opened up at Ford Island at the Commander Anti-Submarine Warfare Force Command. And the gal that worked with me (was) told (by) this chief from that office. They were looking for someone to fill that position, so he said it was a GS-11 job. They wanted to know if she knew of anybody, so she recommended me. She came over one day and told me that this job was open (and) said, "Why don't you take it because I know you can do it."

So I called personnel, and they said, yes, I was qualified because I had just gone up to the ten position, and to go to an eleven would be no problem. Because you can jump from a nine to an eleven, you see. So because I had the ten would be even better.

Then just luckily, I had a very good, outstanding rating from my commander. He's not usually the one to rate me, it would be my, the executive officer, the civilian executive officer, but the commander gave me an excellent write-up. So it just happened that way and I was just lucky. I put in for the job, and I got it. I was interviewed by the officer who was leaving, and he left it open so that the incoming officer taking his place would interview me. So after that second interview, I was selected. And so I went there as a Budget and Accounting Officer, GS-11.

In the meantime, the civil service terminology changed from CAF to GS, meaning general services. I took the eleven position as the Budget and Accounting Officer for Anti-Submarine Warfare Force. (Subsequently), I got promoted to a twelve. In my eleven years there, I had seven outstanding awards. We had (fourteen) subordinate activities. My assistant, who was a seven at that time, went to an interview and got a nine in one of our subordinate commands next door. So I rewrote (the) job sheet, for the assistant, and it came back as an eleven.

MK: Oh.

AC: (Chuckles) From a seven to an eleven. I knew this fellow from the office I left, in the disbursing office. Well, that accounting office now was closing down because the work now was going back to San Diego. (They) were going to close and so he put in for the job and he got it. (He was) with me (for one year and I had) taught him all the ropes. I was very active with the Korean community, so I, one day, casually told my secretary, "Gee, if I had a job in Korea, I sure would like to go there, because when I was there in 1975 for a visit, it was a three-week visit, but I really didn't see much, because I had been sick for one week at the hotel." I came home, not finishing up the three weeks.

And so, one day, about two weeks later, she saw this *Federal Digest* or federal newspaper. And she said, "Jobs in Korea!"

And I said, "Where?"

The army has the overseas employment office, located in the [Prince Kūhiō] Federal Building. So I called over there and the lady says, "We don't have a job that you are interested in," and it was the financial manager position, that's the name of the position that I hold. So she told me, "You can just put in an application, and if you don't get selected for a job within a year, then we'll just deep six that file."

So I came home and I told my husband, (while) he's reading the paper, and he said, "Up to you."

I said, "How about me putting in for a job in Korea?"

And he was just nonchalant, and I guess not even listening. And then so . . .

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 22-53-4-93; SIDE ONE

MK: Okay, you can continue where you left off.

AC: (About one week later, our personnel clerk calls me and says, "Did you put in for a job with the army?")

(I asked her, "How do you know?")

She says, "Well, we received (a) letter of request for a loyalty check."

I said, "Gee, for an activity that doesn't have a job open, they sure (are) sending out inquiries so quickly."

So anyway, about two months later—this was in April, right—May, June. About June, I went in for an operation and then I came out, and the day I started to work, just about the ending of June, or early part of July, I got a call one afternoon, from the Korean office, that's the Eighth Army in Korea. The comptroller's office called and the secretary says if I was still interested in the job. So I told her, "Well, depends what it is."

So she says, "The comptroller, deputy comptroller will call you." And she said, "What would be a good time?"

So I said, "Well, call me about five o'clock, local time here." I told her what time it was now, and so I'll be home at that time.

So, sure enough, they called me, and he told me it was the same position title that I had and it would be at the GS-12, step ten, which is the highest, I'm having now. I (said), "Well,

that's the minimum I'll take."

So he said, "Yes, it is." And he said, "We have three applicants. We finalized three and so you're one of them. We'll make a choice now. So when we do in about a couple of days, we'll let you know." And that's how I got called. I didn't even go for an interview. And they selected me.

And that's how, when I came home, and I told my husband, "I might be selected, you know." He couldn't say anything.

So I was selected and that's how I made up my mind to go. And the job is obligated two years, which means my job here is obligated, which I can come back to, after my contract. So I said, "I don't have anything to lose, you know."

But he (didn't) want to go because he's a schoolteacher, and he's nearing his end of the twenty years or twenty-five years he put in. So I went on my own, and he stayed back and he became my dependent for transportation purposes. He came and stayed with me. I left here in September '78; June of 1979, he came and stayed with me until August, then came back. And then, I retired in 1980, the following year. I almost extended, you know, but what had happened was that when I got there in September, 1978 on December 22, I was back here because I took some leave before they sent me to school in Fort Lee, Virginia. I was there the whole month of January (1979), and I went back in February, to Korea. And then, stayed there all of '79 and in between I had people coming (to visit). I had somebody come in April, stayed until May 30. My husband came around ten, eleven, twelfth, someplace around there, right after school was over (in June) and stayed with me until August. My daughter came in September, stayed until October. Then my sister and her husband came, stayed with me for two weeks. Then my—another friend came over and stayed with another friend from Pusan. They stayed until the ending of October, when Park Chung Hee passed away. November I was alone. And then, December 11, I came back here for my vacation, and I didn't go back until January 15, 1980. And then, when I was leaving, my husband's voice (started to get hoarse). So I said, "Gee, you better check (with) your doctor."

Then, two days later, I had spent a day in Japan, (my son) called me. And I said, "Oh, how's Daddy?"

And he said, "He can't talk," you know. "Lost his voice completely."

Subsequently he lost fifteen pounds in about two months and couldn't talk. So they sent him to a speech therapist at the university [University of Hawai'i], from Kaiser [Medical Center]. I just kind of wondered now what was going on (as) they (said) some polyps (were removed). So I'm thinking to myself, don't tell me he's got some kind of cancer or something and they're not telling me.

So in March, I'm supposed to—six months before your time is up (in) September 1980, I'm supposed to make up my mind as to whether I'm going to renew (my contract). So they asked me if I'm going to renew. I said, "Gee, I'm having a problem with my husband now, so I don't know what to do. I'm going to be fifty-five in June of 1980."

So when I (told) some people I (had) already put in thirty-eight years, they told me, "Well, why don't you retire so you can leave?"

(I said), "I still have until September (to complete the contract)."

Somebody said, "I think you can because they had a case like that."

So I went to personnel and sure enough, she said, "If you can convince your commanding officer, you may retire in June and go home, and don't finish up your contract (for) three months, and (you) don't have to refund, reimburse the government for the transportation cost."

So I showed the commander the picture of my husband. He was so skinny. He lost fifteen pounds. And he looked like a Korean refugee. So he said, "Who's this?" He had met my husband (and could not recognize the photo).

I said, "Oh, that's Soon Ho."

He said, "Oh, I can't believe it."

So they let me go. So I retired, when I became fifty-five in June. I came back and stayed for five months and decided to look for a job. Can't find one because I'm too highly qualified. I wanted some kind of low-key job this time, just to get by. Then about---and then I had a job, I found a job. I went to an employment agency and I got a job with this House of Adler. I worked in the accounting office, accounts receivable. Then, about a month later, they had an opening at the navy for the nonappropriated fund, so I put in for it and I got that job, as a GS-7. I put in eight years, and then my husband got sick. So I decided to retire, and then one week after I retired, he passed away. So really---and then, it turned out that it seems like all the activities I went to, they all closed down. (Chuckles) The accounting department closed, you know. And then, I went to Ford Island, that anti-submarine---we changed our name to Commander Third Fleet. So when I left, it was the Commander Third Fleet. I was the comptroller there. After I went to Korea, I retired, then I took the nonappropriated fund. So Commander Third Fleet closed. Korea now is downgrading, so they're going to relocate from Seoul to another place. And then this nonappropriated fund job that I had, that office close(d) up also. And then, so . . .

(Laughter)

AC: I hated to think about it that way, but it turned out that way. In looking back, I really don't know what would have happened to me and our family. At that time, it would have been just my mother and myself. I would have gone to school, and probably looked for a part-time job, and then probably got employment someplace. But I know the war just turned everything upside down for everybody, and for some people who lost their family members. Even at work too, you had lot(s) of people from the Mainland, contract employees. On Ford Island, we had what they call the A & R, the assembly and repair, that was a naval air station. We had lots of Mainland contract employees who were employed there. They had a program where local boys were recruited for aircraft mechanic jobs. They were helpers in the beginning, or apprentice aircraft mechanics, and they came through, and they were hired through the employment office. For the first time in the history of the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, we employed a Japanese fellow. One Japanese [ancestry] fellow came and that opened the door for the rest of them. There was no racial discrimination after that. For many years, only other than Japanese, no Japanese were employed in Pearl Harbor.

MK: When was the first one hired?

AC: I think---I was there between '42 and '47, right. So it must have been around '44, '43, around there, that he was. . . . In fact, his name was, I think, the first guy, if I remember, was Max Isara. I still remember that fellow. The reason why we know about it is because I was working (on the) payroll at that time. I think it was in '43, '44.

MK: You know, when you were working at Pearl Harbor, during World War II, what was it like for you? You know, you're a local girl, you're young. What was it like working on a military base during World War II?

AC: In the beginning, I was really naive. We just worked, went back and forth and I happened to be (in) a department that had all civilians, and they were local civilians, like the payroll and the supply department. So my associates were all local people. And then you had many local girls who married military personnel that they met there. I was not in contact with too many of them, because---working time, and I was one that had a job that was strictly, mostly civilian. Only towards the latter part of my stay there, maybe around '45, '46, they had military personnel come into our payroll department. But prior to that time, we didn't. I worked with WAVES [Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service], and then we also had military guys. They were assigned to the supply (department). And especially because the military normally do not get assigned to like---this is a civilian payroll department, not military. We never handled the military, you see. So it was very unusual, but I guess at that time they had enough military personnel to be assigned to this kind of job. So I had a few contacts, not too many.

MK: How---even in those few contacts, how was it for you? You know, you've never been with so many people from off-island, from outside, what was it like?

AC: Was different. I guess even during lunch hour, they go out and eat, but then we also had contract employees too. Those were civilian contract employees from the Mainland that worked in our office, so they were again different. They had their own style of doing things, but I wasn't a very people person. So I just was to myself. And then too, my sister was working with me, until 1945, I think maybe, '45. She was in the same department. And then I knew some church ladies, women, and other girls same ethnic group, that worked there. And I made friends with Chinese girls, so those were really my contacts and then we had like a group of girls that went out. So that was what I really was doing. I never had---oh, and then maybe we would have parties, like the office parties would go on. And like I said, most of them---see, we were considered very young kids, you know, sixteen year(s) old and seventeen. Those other people were already in their twenties when they started working, you see. So we were, we had a big gap, so we were more like kids. So if they had parties, we never went. But in the latter years, I think maybe at the end, maybe like '46, '47, just before I left, I did attend parties they had. Like weekend(s), they would go to a picnic. Then I would join them, but not before then. And anyway, that was after VJ-Day, '45. So that was it. But, I never gave it a thought, really. You know, it was just going to work and coming back, and the same old routine.

MK: And then, you know, being of Asian ancestry, when, say, the workers from the Mainland would see you on-base, would it pose any problems, you know?

AC: I think the mix was more locals, at that time, than Mainland. Especially in the kind of

department we worked in, supply department. Most of our workers were locals, and a few, here and there in different departments, we had the Mainland contract employees, but other than that, mostly were locals. And then the sailors were assigned to (the) stores group, the supply rooms, where they issue supplies and stock supplies. They would be there. But I hardly had any contact with them except those that were actually working with us.

MK: And then, you know, in your case, where you started with defense work during World War II, you started then and you made it a career. How about all the other local kids that starting working about your time? Did many of them continue or did they just stop once the war ended?

AC: No. Many of my friends continued. Many, many of us retired after twenty, thirty—most of them were thirty years and up that—especially in that finance office, that disbursing office I worked in. We still get together and we have get-togethers like maybe during Christmas. And we still have a close bond. Not with the other places I've worked. I kind of lost—except on Ford Island, I still am in close contact with at least two or three people now. [From one] office we have a whole group of people, almost twenty or more, that we still get together and see each other.

MK: And did they come from backgrounds like yours, where they had maybe like a high school education and just continued on through?

AC: That's right. Most of us were high school education only. A few, I think, have gone on to become college graduates, that quit their work and went on. And like that basketball player—what's his name—Red Rocha. He was on Ford Island before too, working in that assembly and repair. But he was just in the assembly and repair. We remember him because he was such a tall, lanky guy. I think there are the other few people that have gone out to work. I know there's a Filipino fellow that I know was working with us in time (section who) went out to work for the bank, Bank of Hawai'i, Jose Balmores. He was one of the well-known swimmers, in the early times. A few of them, I'm sure, have gone to—I can't recall right now who they are, but then we had many people who also went and had their college degrees while working. They worked and then went on. I probably could have done it myself, but I didn't have that much ambition. I took the GED test at the university, and then I passed, and then I took one course in accounting, and then I got pregnant, so I just dropped it. And then I took one course in math and that was it. I never followed through. I wish I did though.

MK: But you were still able to, you know . . .

AC: So my husband always tells me and other people that, sometimes a college degree means nothing and I did well without one. But still, I feel that the potential for, many other things, probably, would have been at my fingertips if I had a college degree. And then, too, I don't know about other ethnic groups, but the Koreans are very much—especially those that come out now from Korea, they're all highly educated. You know, these Koreans are very much so, and many of them, I'd say a good percentage are college grads. They kind of look down on you, (if) you don't have a college degree. Over here, local people, I don't think we think about anyone as, "Oh, you don't have a college degree," or something like that. But I think Koreans do that. They tend to play up to people who have a degree. In other words, unless you have a degree, or unless you have lots of money, maybe. If you're in-between, you're lost.

(Laughter)

AC: That's one. I think that's one of my regrets, and that's the reason why when my children were growing up, I kept telling especially my son that he should get a degree. And if he wants to be a beach bum, he can do that after he gets his certificate, this sheepskin. I told him, "You can be a beach bum, and when you're tired, at least you have that to fall back on. But if you don't get a degree," I said, "I don't care what happens, you can go so far, and that's it."

And then, too, sometimes I think I probably could have had a higher grade, but, let's see, no matter what they say, one, I'm an Oriental, and I'm a woman. You understand. In those days, in the seventies, it's not what it is today. They did put in for a higher grade, but it always came back as a twelve [GS-12], which was okay, as far as I'm concerned, and I got my step ten, which is the highest. Every time you get an outstanding, you get a step increase. But really, had I been a male, I'm sure I probably would have gotten this male pulling strings for the male, the old boy network, if you might call that. I think there is a difference. I don't care what you say.

MK: And so, you know, you work for the military all the way through and you got married in nineteen . . .

AC: Forty-nine.

MK: . . . 1949. And three children?

AC: Three children. And then I went on numerous trips, my job called for trips. I went to Norfolk, Virginia, I think about three times. I went to Washington twice on conferences and Chicago. Then I went to San Diego many times. Oakland, California, I went to Seattle. We had activities under our command in those areas, so I really was lucky. One time when I was there, in Norfolk, Virginia, the World's Fair was going on, 1964, New York World's Fair. So we took leave and then went up to the New York World's Fair. And then, one year, I was sent to the, from Commander Third Fleet, I went to the—I think it was called the Anti-Submarine Warfare Force at that time, I'm not sure. But anyway, changed name. Same activity only different name. I was sent to (the) Maxwell Air Force Base, in Montgomery, Alabama in 1974. And then, at that time, I had a friend in Jacksonville, Florida. So over the long President's Day vacation, there was (a fellow) in class (who drove) off (on) Friday night and never come back until Sunday evening. One day I asked him where he was going. We all lived in that dorm (with) sixty-two students in that class. It was a comptroller's course. Professional Military Comptroller's Course. (It) was a mini-MBA [master of business administration] (course), can you believe? It was a mini-MBA equivalent. I couldn't believe it, because, I'm not (even a college grad[uate]). They had testing, and I didn't know what the score was. And all these other guys were college grads, and officers. It's a GS-13 position course. But I'm a twelve, but they asked me to go, so I went, not knowing what it was all about. I really had a good time, (but) what an experience. But anyway, he told me he was going to Jacksonville, Florida, (his home). I told him I had a friend over there. So he told me, "Call her up and then, you can go with me and come back."

So I called her, one of our old friends, (who was) running (the) *Hale Kaukau* in Jacksonville, Florida, right behind (the) naval air station, Jacksonville. She said, "By all means, we're old family friend(s), you know."

It turned out that when (my friend) was there waiting for me, (she) found out that their children had the same piano teacher that they knew. It was so funny because it's a small world. They took me down to [Walt] Disney World over the long (President's Day) weekend, and we came back home. It was really good.

So I made all kinds of trips, and then, too, the navy at that time allowed, when I first worked there, in 1940, let's see, in the forties. So anyway, in 1950, let's see, in 1949, I got married. In 1950, my first anniversary would be July 2, but on July 1, I was on a transport going to the U.S. Mainland for the first time. These two girls that worked at supply center came to my office and said, "Let's go to the Mainland on this transport." And at that time, if you worked five years, you were eligible to ride the transport and this is the U.S. Naval Ship, USNS. And you can ride the ship and go for \$7.50, just pay your *kaukau*. So it was the USNS *General Anderson* that we went on. (When I told) my husband (about the girls' trip), he said, "Go." So I went with the girls, three of us.

We caught the boat, and that was right after the Korean War [started], 1950. We had blackout on board (the) ship, so (it) wasn't very good, but (we had) nice sit-down (meals). We (docked in) San Francisco. From there, (we went) all the way to Detroit. (One of the girls) picked up a car (in Detroit). We (drove) to Niagara Falls, (New York), Washington, cross-country to Grand Canyon, Los Angeles, and then I went up to Oregon to see my sister. I flew back with my mother. But the two girls came back on the transport. So it was (only) \$7.50. I really enjoyed working for the government. I had all kinds of trips.

MK: So in a sense, you know, the government gave some, well it gave you an opportunity for a job that maybe you wouldn't have gotten outside. Gave you some opportunities for travel. And I guess pay-wise, it was . . .

AC: Pay-wise was good. I was always on top of things. But like I said, had I been a male, I probably would have gotten a little higher, but what can I say. I was well treated and I really enjoyed it.

MK: I'm going to end the interview here then.

END OF INTERVIEW

AN ERA OF CHANGE

Oral Histories of Civilians in World War II Hawai'i

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